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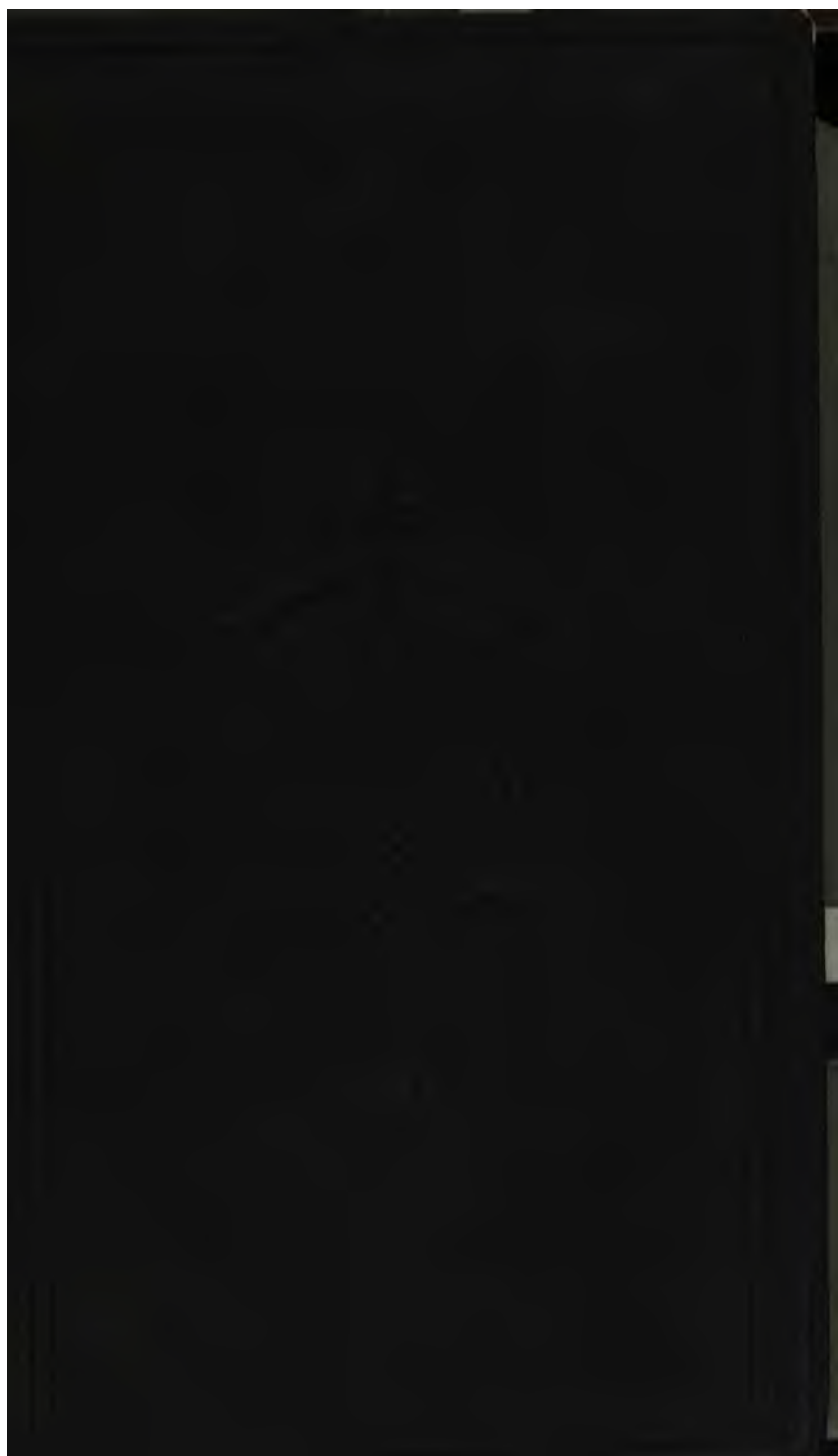
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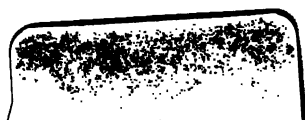
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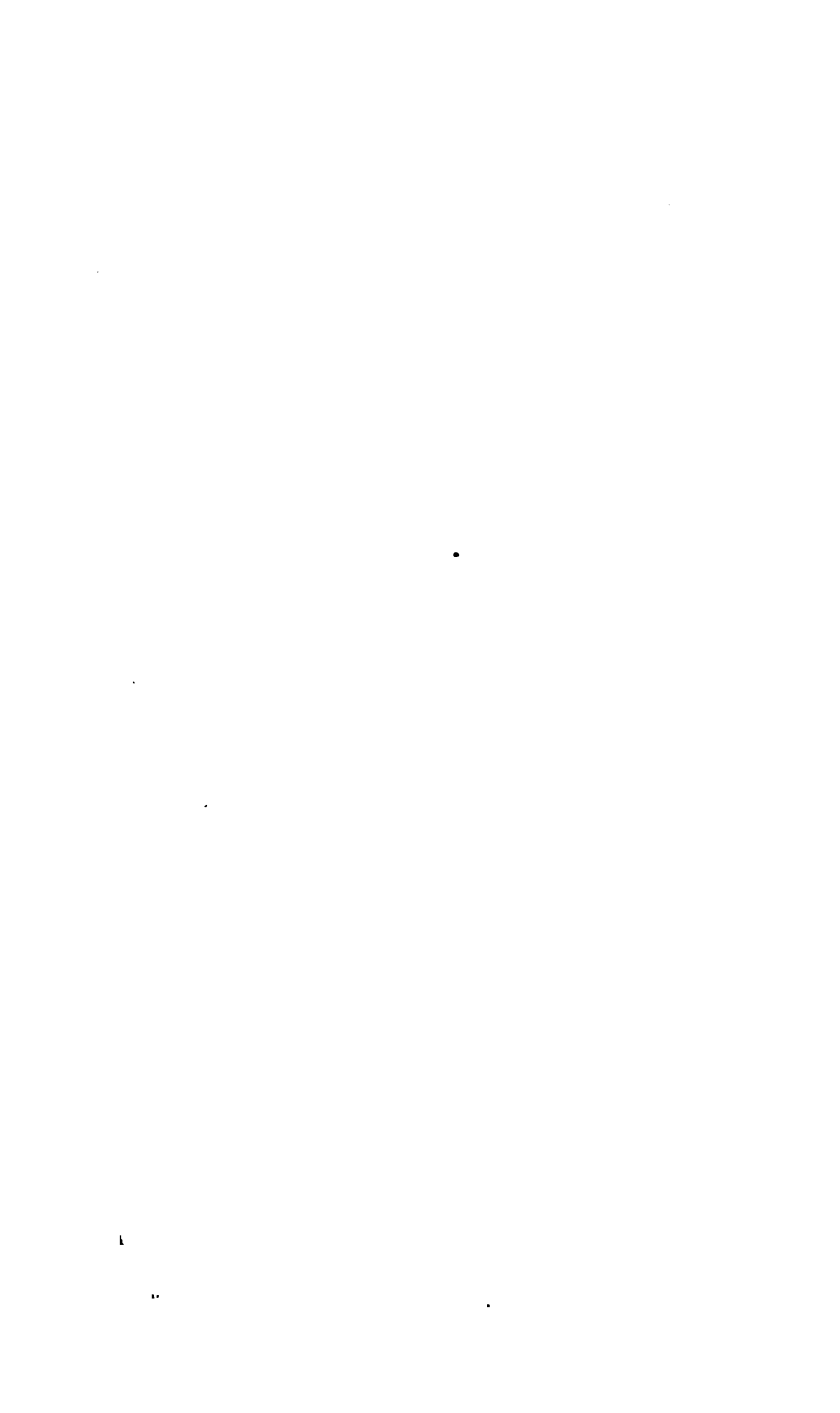




THE HOPE
OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH:

BEING
LECTURES DELIVERED DURING LENT,
AT ST. GEORGE'S, BLOOMSBURY,

By Twelve Clergymen of the Church of England.



THE HOPE OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH:

OR,

THE DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF CHRISTIANS IN
CONNEXION WITH THE SECOND ADVENT,
AS UNFOLDED IN THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS.

BEING

LECTURES
DELIVERED DURING LENT, 1845,
AT ST. GEORGE'S, BLOOMSBURY.

By Twelve Clergymen of the Church of England.

WITH A PREFACE,
BY THE REV. T. R. BIRKS,
FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, RECTOR OF KELSEY, HERTS,
AND AUTHOR OF "ELEMENTS OF PROPHECY."



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P R E F A C E.

THIS volume contains a fourth series of lectures on prophecy, preached in London during the season of Lent; the first at West-street Episcopal Chapel, and the others at St. George's, Bloomsbury. The first series treated of the prophecies which refer to the Jews, and the three others, including the present volume, relate immediately to the second coming of our Lord. This great hope of the Church has been considered, first, as a doctrine of our faith; next, as a motive for practical holiness; and, lastly, as it is presented in one of the earliest epistles, inwrought into the whole texture of the Word of God.

The attempt to revive a truth, so prominent in the Scriptures, and yet so much neglected by Christians, ought to require no excuse. The message may have been feebly uttered; traces of human infirmity may adhere to it in every part; but still it is little else than an echo to the voice of prophets and apostles, which no serious Christian will venture to despise.

The Epistle to the Thessalonians, on which the Lectures in this volume are founded, is probably the first and earliest which was sent by the Spirit to the Churches. The infancy and first upspringing of the blade is here joined with the promise of the harvest home; and the Church, scarcely launched on its long and dangerous voyage of eighteen hundred years, has the haven towards which she is steering set full in her view. In a time of such weighty conflicts as are now around us, and which involve the welfare or ruin both of our Church and our country, it may be well to turn aside a moment from the battle-field, and, in the mirror of this short and heavenly Epistle, to contemplate that glorious hope of the Apostolic

Christians, which will soon put an end to the conflict with evil, and usher in the everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace.

The coming of the Lord is indeed set before us with peculiar prominence in this first message of the Spirit to the Gentile Church. Each of the five chapters into which the Epistle has been divided closes with a distinct mention of this glorious hope. It may be a preface, not unsuitable to the work, to unfold briefly the various aspects in which it is here presented to us by the Spirit of God.

And, first, the hope of the Advent, as here exhibited, is the crown and completion of all Christian graces. Very lovely and beautiful is the picture here offered us of the early Church. The distractions of later times had not yet begun. Questions of form and discipline, of rites and ceremonies, had scarcely come in, or quenched with sounds of strife and variance, the first glow of love to the incarnate and suffering and risen Saviour. They were abiding "in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." There was a

blessed communion and fellowship, which linked their hearts with an unseen world of light, love, and holiness. Their life was hidden with Christ in God, and the infinite goodness of the Lord was become the true and secret dwelling-place of their souls.

Such was the fountain-head of their religion, and the streams answered to the nature of that fountain. The souls of these idolaters, who were bowing down so lately to stocks and stones, were now become as a watered garden, and all the pleasant fruits of righteousness were to be found in them. Their faith was resting on the unseen God, and on the one Mediator, who had died for their sins, and was now entered into glory. This faith was not idle or lifeless, but wrought in them a deep and fervent love to the Lord himself who had bought them, to the people of Christ, and to all their brethren of mankind. While they mused ever on the goodness of the Saviour, who had called them out of darkness into marvellous light, the fire of love burned in their hearts, and prompted them to laborious efforts for the salva-

tion of their fellow-men. Amidst the thick darkness of the heathen world, their lives, like the silver trumpets of the law, uttered sounds of deep melody, and sent forth sweet echoes of love and mercy through the caverns of many a heart which sin had filled with misery and darkness. "For from you sounded forth the Word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your love to God is spread abroad." Their idols had been cast away at the foot of the cross, and every affection of their heart was now devoted to the service of the living God, who had manifested His own love to them by so great and wonderful a sacrifice, and provided so costly a ransom for their souls.

But the crown of these various and lovely graces of the Spirit was their hope in the returning Saviour. They were waiting for the Son of God from heaven. This glorious prospect was full in their view. The Spirit who dwelt within them wisely veiled from their view the long vista of conflict, apostasy, and idolatrous darkness; and fixed their eyes, with a stedfast and unwavering

faith, on that kingdom of peace and joy which was to dawn, with the Sun of Righteousness, on a lost and sinful world.

This hope of the Apostolic Church is thus held up to our view as the crown of every other grace in the heart of the Christian. Then the work of faith will be completed, and the labour of love will obtain a full and blessed reward. The secret election of God's sovereign grace will then have revealed itself in the full redemption of his people; and the voice of the Gospel, which has gone forth in sounds of mercy over a lost and fallen world, will return in anthems of praise from ransomed millions, who shall then meet in the presence of their Lord.

Grace, in the heart of the Christian, by its very nature, borrows from the Infinite. It cannot be content with what it finds in itself, or sees around it. Its first instinct is to remount to its source, and to lose itself in unsearchable perfection. And as the flowers which have been nurtured, and raised out of the dark soil into life and beauty by the air and rain of heaven, pour out their fragrance

upon the air that sustains them ; so the people of Christ, who have been redeemed from the darkness of sin by His first coming, send forth the fragrance of their affections in desires for his return, when He shall stoop once more from the throne of his glory. And no surer mark can be given of the ripeness of Divine grace in their souls than when they have learned “to wait for the Son of God from heaven,” and say, with the beloved Apostle, “Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.”

But the Holy Spirit sets the same blessed hope before us in another light, as the pledge of eternal union between the ministers of Christ and his believing people. “For what is our hope, our joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his appearing? For ye are our glory and our joy.”

It is a beautiful portrait which the Apostle has previously given of his affection towards his own converts. There was the wisdom of a father, and the tenderness of a nursing mother. There was the depth of affectionate desire, and the fidelity of

holy warnings. There was a full sympathy with them in their heavy trials, and a lively joy in their spiritual welfare. But all these various forms of love blended together in one thought which crowned and completed them, the prospect of full and eternal union in the presence of Christ. This gave its depth of interest to every hour of passing intercourse. It was only the earnest of a society that should never be broken. This clothed the message of grace with its deepest power. The fruits of it were to be manifested in glory when the Lord should appear.

And now, after eighteen centuries, if anything can have power to extinguish priestly pride, or to repress the risings of self-will; to clear away the leaven of self-righteousness, silence the clamours of strife and contention, and restore full, deep, and holy union between the ministers and the people of Christ, it must be the same blessed hope which is here revealed to us. Once let us realize the prospect of meeting in the presence of Him who died for us, and how miserable will it seem to be contending about trifles, disputing about forms,

and losing sight of our high and holy privilege, to be fellow-helpers on the road to heaven. How wise and blessed will those pastors then appear who shall have nourished their flock with the sincere milk of the Word, and with all meekness and gentleness trained their spirits in the great truths of the Gospel. How foolish will those appear who have distracted them with trifles, or goaded them into resistance and madness by arrogance and pride. How blessed, again, will be those who have waited on the teaching of God's Word in humility and faith, not to nourish dark suspicions, and seek out occasions for offence and pretexts for strife, but to receive life and healing from the message of salvation! How grievous will be their folly, who have turned the very food of their souls into wormwood and bitterness! The vision of that meeting which is at hand, should sink into utter silence and oblivion one half of the feuds which now distract the Church, and lead every pastor to cherish the flock of Christ committed to him, with a deep and overflowing tenderness; while the people, in their

turn, would be taught to banish all needless and petty suspicions, to shut their ears only against false doctrine ; but in all other things to follow after peace, and to esteem their pastors very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among themselves.

From this aspect of the great hope of the Church, our thoughts are led on to another, not less beautiful and glorious. We see in it the great remedy for Christian solitude, the provision for an everlasting union among those who are now scattered through the earth. The Christian, like the Apostle at Athens, will now often have to walk alone. The wilderness is the type of his present state, and solitude may often be his portion. There may be seasons of deep and bitter loneliness, when the heart is ready to pine away under its own burden, and can find no bosom into which to pour its sorrows. But there is a blessed change before it, when the wilderness shall be changed for a land inhabited, even the true land of promise ; and the deep solitude of a heart dwelling in the midst of idols, without a friend, for the

union of saints, unblameable in holiness, in the presence of their Lord. This chapter, indeed, is like a vision of hope to every child of sorrow, who has shared the anguish of the great Apostle when left in the idol city alone. How different his state hereafter, when standing foremost in honour amidst the countless numbers of the redeemed ! And scarcely less bright will be the contrast between the present state of many a solitary mourner and the full tide of joy that will thrill hereafter through his bosom, when once admitted to that blessed society of heaven, and his heart shall be unblameable in holiness, and overflowing with gladness and heavenly communion “ at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” .

The same blessed hope is further revealed to us, in connexion with all past ages, and the re-union of the departed saints with those who are now sojourning on the earth. There is thus a climax, like the steps in the ladder of Jacob, by which we may rise to fuller and fuller views of its Divine glory. It is first exhibited as the crown of all

graces in each separate believer. It is then presented to us, as the time when the union of every pastor with his own flock, and the people whom he has taught in the ways of Christ, shall be perfected in their mutual joy and gladness for ever. Our view is then enlarged to the whole family of God on earth, and the frequent solitude of His people, amidst the busy haunts of worldliness, is contrasted with the innumerable multitude of saints who shall appear with the Lord in blessed union and unblameable in holiness. And now the Spirit bids us extend our view still further, and include the saints of all past generations in one magnificent and glorious prospect. "We who are alive and remain, shall not prevent them which are asleep." From righteous Abel to the last saint who shall be consigned to the grave before the trumpet of the archangel, all shall be gathered into the presence of the Saviour. How many a tie that seemed broken for ever, shall then be repaired and revived, with infinite accessions of joy! How many, dear and beloved on earth, will re-appear in celestial beauty, to

gladden the hearts which had mourned for their loss. "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." How will the surprise of the patriarch be repeated and multiplied ten thousand-fold in the heart of each of his spiritual children, when the message shall be revealed in the glory of the resurrection. My son, my daughter, my father, my mother, are yet alive; and, behold, they are become rulers and princes in the kingdom of God for ever! Who can reckon the joy of that hour, or conceive the full gush of thanksgiving in the hearts of God's children, when "the early lost, the beautiful, the dead," and other unknown companions from unknown tribes and kindreds of the earth, shall all meet together, and form one blessed and eternal fellowship in the presence of their Lord!

It is humbling to think how seldom, as Christians, we realize the actual and present life of those who are now entered into their rest. It is a proof of the weakness of our faith and the dimness of our vision, that we speak and feel so often as if

only one generation of mankind were really alive. But the Word of God reveals to us a different scene: "All live unto Him." The busy generation of triflers upon earth are encompassed, above and around and beneath, by spirits immortal as themselves, and who will shortly meet with them before the judgment-seat. The antiquities of nations are not lost in hopeless obscurity. From the days of Noah until now, every pilgrim, in every tribe of earth, will have his course upon earth unveiled; and every child of God, in remotest ages, add to the joys prepared for His people now living upon earth. The heart of the fathers will then be turned to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers; when, from righteous Abel to the last convert of India or New Zealand, all shall be joined in one holy company, and "be for ever with the Lord."

Once more the Holy Spirit presents the same glorious hope to the Apostolic Church, and crowns and seals it by one further truth, the faithfulness of the everlasting God. This is the keystone in the arch of promise, which gives firmness and

stability to the whole. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." The growth of grace in each separate Christian, the full union of pastors and people, the gathering of God's children, once solitary, from every region of the earth, and the re-union of the dead and the living, and the saints of remotest generations, all are sealed and confirmed by this blessed truth. There is an eternal counsel of love which must be fulfilled. There is a decree gone forth in heaven, and all the powers of earth or hell cannot stay its execution; which gives a pledge of perfect holiness to every child of God, and ensures that his spirit and soul and body shall be blameless in the day of the Lord's appearing. Every command is a preparation for this final triumph. The doctrines and the promises of the Gospel, the labours of Christ's ministers, and the sufferings of His people, are alike designed to hasten this blessed time, and minister fresh elements of joy and gladness to the glory which will then be revealed.

Such is the hope which was set before the Apostolic Church in this earliest message of the

Spirit of God. How totally unlike the delusive counterfeits which folly and superstition have often set up in its stead! And now, after eighteen centuries have passed, surely it should be dearer to the Christian than ever, and occupy a still larger space in his meditations and prayers. The Church has now passed through many changes, and the signs of a last and severe conflict are thickening in the horizon. Conflicts, deep and earnest and vital, are stirring the hearts of her members, and the inquiry arises anew, as from the lips of the prophet, "O, my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" If our great and noble empire casts aside the sheet-anchor of the Word of God, and refuses to hear its solemn warnings, content to steer amidst shoals and quicksands, by the miserable expedients of an hour; if our Church resigns the inheritance of a pure faith for superstition which seemed flung away to the moles and bats for ever, what can the righteous do but turn their eyes, in spirit, to the East, and wait once more for the rising of the Day-star in His glory? This blessed hope will be the only full and

effectual cure for the relapses of blind superstition and the confederacies of apostate wisdom. Whatever evils may threaten us, and whatever rocks and breakers may be around the Church, there is no need to faint, much less to despair. Even the purest Churches may renounce their first faith, and, forgetting their first love, fall once more into error; and the moles and bats of an earth-born expediency may, in these last days, adopt the rejected idols of their forefathers, to their own and a nation's ruin. But here is a hope which no apostasy can defeat, and no confederacy of evil annul or destroy. It rests on the sure promise and oath of the living God: "I the Lord will hasten it in its time." He will overturn, and still overturn, until the rightful King shall appear, and the nations of the earth are given Him for His inheritance. On this truth let our souls anchor amidst the changes and conflicts now around us. The Lord is sitting above the water-floods; and the same Lord, who now controls the madness of the people, will soon appear in His beauty, and He will then remain and abide a King for ever.

The mightiest forms of evil that now alarm and terrify us, are only giant shadows, and will flee away and disappear for ever when this Day-spring shall arise. This hope, as it still draws nearer, will knit the hearts of true Christians into one. They will feel more and more their blessed character, as heirs together of the grace of life, even of that eternal life which was once manifested in the depth of its condescension, and will soon reveal itself once more in the brightness of its glory.

May it please God, even by these Lectures, to advance this work of preparation in the hearts of His children. It is right still to labour in the cause of truth, and to use all vigorous efforts to stem the tide of superstition and unbelief. The three unclean spirits may be loud, active, subtle, and mighty; "but yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier." But our hope must not be in present and immediate success; we must look beyond, through clouds and storms, to the final victory. The turning of things upside-down may go on prosperously for a time; but it will be only

as the potter's clay : and all shall be suddenly and mightily reversed when the King of kings shall appear. His Word shall then be the only standard of safety and wisdom. The dreams of superstition will pass away like a vision of the night ; and the plans of worldly policy, where the Word of God and His warnings are forgotten, be buried, as they justly deserve, in everlasting shame. Then judgment will dwell in those nations of the earth which are now a moral wilderness, and righteousness remain in the vineyard of the Church—that fruitful field now overgrown with the poison-tree of idolatry, and the stubborn weeds of strife and self-will. The clouds will pass away, the storm will disappear, the waves of national convulsion and discord be hushed into silence, and the promise of God be abundantly fulfilled ; for then “ the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.”

Kelshall, April 19, 1845.

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LECTURE 1.

WAITING FOR CHRIST THE FRUIT OF FAITH IN THE GOSPEL.

BY THE REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH,

RECTOR OF WATTON, HERTS.

1 THESS. I. 10.

“ To wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

THE First Epistle to the Thessalonians, we have reason to think, was among the earliest, and, as is generally supposed, the first of the inspired epistles of the New Testament. It was written by the great apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, and thus contains the earliest aspect of Divine truth set before the Gentile Church. The freshness and the power of the whole are evident. The prominence of the great hope of the Church, the

second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, is very striking through the epistle. In this view it has been selected by the beloved brethren who have planned the courses of lectures delivered on that subject in Lent for the last two years in this church, as eminently calculated to quicken our minds to that blessed hope.

In our text, waiting for the Lord is joined with service of the living and true God, as the second chief mark of the real conversion of the Christians at Thessalonica : *Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.*

But the Church has now greatly lost sight of this hope. The unlooked-for long delay of its accomplishment has been full of blessing in the large increase of those who shall share its fullest joys for ever ; but, through the unbelief of man, it has made even the wise virgins cease to be watchful for it. Christians have too much forgotten their blessed hope, and have put death in the place of the second coming. The millennium has also been unhappily regarded as taking place before the coming of our Lord, and viewed as the immediate object of hope ; and thus men's eyes have been turned from the coming Saviour to other hopes. The spirit of waiting for Christ has thus been very widely lost in the Church of

Christ. It must be generally restored, and we have good hope that it will be restored; for Christians are *the children of the light*, and *are not in darkness, that that day should overtake them as a thief*. Thus will they be prepared for his coming. To assist the Lord's people to attain this waiting spirit is the special duty of the Lord's watchmen in this day.

I feel assured, then, that our beloved brother, your minister, in opening his pulpit for three successive years to his brethren in the ministry, and inviting them to preach on this subject to his flock, has been consulting your best spiritual interests. I feel assured, that in calling them to this office, and giving them the opportunity, in a central church of our metropolis, and before crowded congregations, to direct the attention of the Church of Christ at large to this blessed hope, he has been fulfilling a high and sacred duty to our Lord Christ and to his Church. There have been many blessings with the two courses already delivered. They have awakened a growing interest in the subject among Christians, and have lifted up a standard for this truth. May a still larger blessing rest upon the course of Lectures now to be delivered on those passages in this First Epistle to the Thessalonians which relate to the coming of our Redeemer. I

earnestly entreat your prayers for myself and my beloved brethren in the ministry, and the congregations who shall hear us, that there may be a special outpouring of the blessed Spirit on all who shall seek to instruct you in the weighty truths contained in this epistle on this subject, as well as on all who shall attend on the instruction given.

And, O gracious Redeemer, thou ever present Saviour, always in the midst of thy people when assembled in thy name, manifest thyself unto us, as thou dost not to the world. Do thou fill us with thine own Spirit, to guide us into all truth, to show us things to come, and to reveal to us the riches of thy grace and the brightness of thy glory in thy heavenly kingdom, for thine own Name's sake. Amen.

We may discern from our text, that besides conversion to serve the true and living God, a waiting spirit is a true effect of rightly receiving the Gospel. This will more distinctly appear in considering various reasons which show us that waiting for Christ is one chief fruit which a cordial reception of the Gospel produces, and open the way to set before you the duty as enforced in the text.

Let us consider these things,—

I. Waiting for Christ is the fruit of the Gospel.

II. The solemn truths by which this duty is enforced in the text.

III. The practice of this blessed duty at this time.

I. WAITING FOR CHRIST IS THE FRUIT OF THE GOSPEL.

Our natural spirit is altogether alienated from such a duty. We are carnally minded, and the carnal mind is enmity against God. We are of the earth, earthy, and our hopes centre there. *The natural man receives not these things, nor can he know them.* The wisdom of God, in this part of revelation also, is *foolishness with men.* *We speak,* the Apostle says, *the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew ;.....but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit ;* hence *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* is described as a special gift of God to us. (1 Cor. i. 7.) Such is our natural darkness on this subject.

But let the Gospel come with all its good tidings of great joy ; let the Gospel of the kingdom be proclaimed, and let God give testimony to the Word of his grace, and accompany it by his Spirit, and natural men are made spiritual men, and discern all things ; they are truly con

verted, they are turned *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus.* (Acts xxvi. 18.) The first step is conversion: and if the Gospel has its just and full influence, a farther step is waiting for his Son from heaven. We see this in the Corinthian, as well as in the Thessalonian Church; they were called to *the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ*, and then they came *behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord.*

Let us dwell on some reasons why the Gospel should have this effect.

1. The Gospel REMOVES GUILT FROM THE SOUL. When we sin conscience accuses us, and nothing but the Gospel can safely and effectually, so that the conscience retains all its sensibility, purity, and tenderness, remove guilt from the mind. Since the fall, we all like Adam naturally dread the presence of God, and every manifestation which he makes of himself. His holiness is insupportable to us. Even the most devoted of his servants in this life shrink from any glimpses of his glory, as we may see in the accounts given us of Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, and John. Isaiah cries, *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the*

midst of a people of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts. And similar have ever been the feelings of God's saints, when any manifestation of the invisible God has been revealed to them. The thought of a judgment to come, from One acquainted with every secret of the heart, and in which we must receive according to all we have done here, is especially terrible. Hence Christ's return is naturally rather painful than delightful, full of terror and not full of hope.

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus, truly and fully received, effectually removes this terror. It restores peace to the conscience. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God, his dying love, his sympathy, his tender compassion, calm our fears, and give quiet to the soul. Such wonderful grace towards sinners is equally surprising and delightful. In his redemption we see God not imputing our sins, and really reconciled to us sinners ; no longer our most dreaded enemy, but our wisest, deepest, kindest, and unequalled Friend. The barrier between us and God, in the inner man, is removed. And though we are exposed, as we see in St. John, to fears at unexpected manifestations of his glory : yet let him reveal himself as *I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen,*

and have the keys of hell and of death : and all fears shall vanish. The enmity is wholly slain by his cross, and we can look forward to his return with holy desire. The thoughts of it are no longer distasteful, but welcome to the heart; we are no longer averse to it, it is a subject of joyful anticipation.

2. THE GOSPEL MAKES US WEARY OF A WORLD OF SIN. It gives us holy desires after the constant presence of the God we love, and yearnings and longings of heart for full communion with him, and for more of his Spirit and image. These desires cannot be fully realized in this world of sin and sorrow. They are checked and too often quenched by corruption within and around. Sin meets us everywhere. Sin grieves us everywhere. Thus we are led by the Spirit to long for a better state, and become weaned from the world. Its pleasures, its business, its honours, its wealth, lose their power over us. We have found something infinitely better; more attractive to our renewed minds, more delightful to the spiritual and heavenly affections that have been given to us. Jesus on the cross is our grand magnet. *I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.* He has drawn us to himself. We can then enter into the apostle's language, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus*

Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. The sin on every side, within us and around us, appears in its true nature, not as our happiness, but as infinitely vile and altogether abominable, and full of misery; we see it at length in its real character, not as our pleasant companion, full of joy and friendship; but as our worst enemy, most hateful and most destructive, dishonourable to God our loving Father, and full of sorrow and ruin to man. Yet in this world sin besets us on every side, and till Christ returns we cannot wholly escape from its contamination and pollution. Much of the Lord's wisdom and love in our temptations, and chastisements, and trials, is now also hidden from us, but it shall hereafter all be revealed. (John xiii. 7.)

The veil withdrawn, thy saints shall trace
The various leadings of thy grace;
And chant, with seraph's love,
How glory, rich in heavenly fruits,
Springs from affliction's bitter roots,
In the bright world above.

Thus the believer longs for a world of purity and holiness, all light and love, ever bright with the presence and glory of the Lord; *we ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.*

3. THE GOSPEL FILLS US WITH LOVE TO THE PERSON OF THE SAVIOUR. It opens to our glad and grateful minds a new world of grace and beauty, goodness and glory, of which we had no previous conception. It reveals to us a new and mysterious, but most lovely, winning, and attractive Being, appearing on earth in our very nature. *Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.* The Lord Jesus Christ is in the Gospel made known to us in all the glories of his Godhead, and in all the tenderness of his manhood, as one with us; and notwithstanding our fallen and miserable state, delighting in us, and determined to save us. The Gospel reveals the unsearchable riches of his grace; his omnipotent power, his tender compassion, his infinite wisdom, and all his many glorious and gracious attributes and perfections. It shows us the innumerable offices of love which he has undertaken in our behalf, and is still carrying on now in heaven for our salvation. Oh, how exhaustless are all the treasures of Divine goodness as they are laid up in Christ Jesus for our use! The Gospel tells us what he has done in our behalf, even from the foundation of the world; what he is now doing for us in the heavenly mansions, appearing for us there in the presence of God, pleading our cause, sending down his precious gifts unto us, acting

even as our Mediator and High Priest, our Prince and our Saviour, and preparing a place for us. He orders everything in heaven and earth for the benefit of his people ; for this end all power is given to him, and *God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to his Church.* The Gospel farther shows us what he will do hereafter, when he returns in his glory. How he will *appear the second time without sin unto salvation to them that look for him*—how he will raise them, and change them, and fashion them like himself, and translate them to his own heavenly home, and present them to his Father faultless, and give them a royal and everlasting kingdom with him for ever and ever. As this is more and more discovered to our minds in the holy Scriptures, through the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, a thousand streams of love flow into the heart, and fill the whole soul, in its innermost recesses, with love, glad and grateful love, to Jesus. *We love him because he first loved us.* But if love be real and fervent, it is pained with absence from the beloved object. If love be true and glowing, it delights in the presence of him on whom it rests. So it is with the Christian whose soul is filled with love to the person of the Saviour. Christ is to him *the chief of ten thousand ; he is altogether lovely ;* the one on

whom his whole soul's affections are supremely fixed. No one has done or can do for him what Christ has done. No one is, no one can be, so originally, so altogether, so completely pure, and perfect, and wise, and good, and mighty, and gracious, as Jesus our most precious Saviour is: indeed, all other goodnesses are but drops from his fulness. No one can be so near and so dear as he who *loved the Church, and gave himself for it, and nourisheth and cherisheth it; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.* Hence the hearty response of welcome in his Church to all the assurances which he gives of his speedy return. We see this often in that beautiful song which describes, by the most touching and affecting of all similes, marriage love, the tender and glowing love between Jesus and his people. *My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. Cause me to hear thy voice. Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.* (Song ii. 16, 17; viii. 14.) Neglect of waiting for Christ, after we have seen the promise of his return in his Word, is a sign of coldness of love to him that we should dread.

See how a beloved relative, a child, a brother, a sister, a husband, or a wife, when absent and expected back, are waited for and welcomed, and all the days or hours counted before they arrive, and by this let us learn the welcome which the Saviour should and will have from his waiting people. Oh, yes! when the joyful cry is heard, *Behold, the bridegroom cometh*, his Church will exultingly reply, *Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him this is the Lord ; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.* (Isa. xxv. 9.)

4. THE GOSPEL RAISES US INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. It lifts us up to something of the vastness and comprehensiveness of his mind. He *inhabiteh eternity. From everlasting to everlasting he is God.* Hence, as the Christian increases in the knowledge of God, and his mind opens and expands to the largeness of God's purposes of love, he rests in God, and patiently waits his time for fulfilling his promises. (Psalm xxxvii. 7 ; Heb. vi. 15.) What are the 4,000 years from the creation to the first advent, or the 2,000 years since, compared with the unsearchable eternity before us,—with the generations of the age of ages yet to come? The delay, thus taking place before the second coming, seems as nothing when viewed in connexion with the everlasting ages

that are to follow. Raised by the Gospel to oneness with the Divine Mind, we can well trust the infinite and unfathomable wisdom of him whose name is both Light and Love, in ordering all the delay for the increase of his Church and its fuller glory and blessedness. We can easily account that his long-suffering is indeed salvation to innumerable multitudes that would never otherwise have been counted with the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb; never otherwise have been reckoned with the first-born, and never otherwise have partaken of the glories of the first resurrection. Thus we can cheerfully obey the direction given to comfort his people in unfulfilled longings of heart, *that they should rest yet for a little season, till their fellow-servants also and their brethren that should be killed should be fulfilled.* Nay, still farther admitted to the heavenly vision of things, and taught especially not to be *ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years*, the believer can see the Divine truthfulness and reality in its being said, even eighteen hundred years ago, *Surely, I come quickly*, and, *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*. Though his Church be yet waiting for his coming, and has heard for centuries the distant murmurs of the mocking taunt, *Where is the promise of his coming?* we know perfectly, *he*

will come as a thief in the night. We judge of quickness and nearness as the Divine mind does with relation to the vastness of the eternity to come, and the all-important and all-deciding event of the Lord's return from heaven. Hence our hopes rest on this blessed event,—the second coming in glory,—and on no nearer object. Our hopes reach onward through all intervening obstacles, and are fixed on the Lord's coming, being assured that then, *when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory.* And as we are raised into fellowship with God in the vastness and comprehensiveness of his mind, as to the duration of time compared with eternity, so yet farther are we raised into fellowship with God as to his infinite goodness in all his thoughts and all his ways. The Gospel brings us into oneness here with God, so complete as to give us perfect and full confidence in our God. Oh, the unutterable sweetness of this entire rest of the heart on the power, the wisdom, the tender mercy, the boundless love, the unfailing sympathy and compassion of God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, and bringing us by his Spirit near to himself, with our hearts reconciled to him! Oh, the unspeakable blessedness of being able to say, with the fulness of a confiding heart, *God, even our own God, shall bless us, and all the*

*ends of the earth shall fear him ! Oh, the deep feelings of reverence and holy awe, and earnest longings of spirit which then lead us to cry, **My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ?***

5. The Gospel REVEALS THE WEIGHT OF GLORY TO BE BESTOWED ON US AT THE RETURN OF OUR LORD AND IN HIS HEAVENLY KINGDOM. All who have read the Scriptures, and marked the passages which refer to our future state, must have observed, how dim is the light given on the state of the departed saints before the advent. It is, indeed, for our great comfort, assured to us as a state of real happiness, being with Christ and his saints in paradise, and far better than anything his best servants have enjoyed here below (Luke xvi. 22 ; xxiii. 43 ; Phil. i. 23) ; and this is all that is required for our hope, peace, and joy, respecting that stage in the unseen world which precedes the Lord's return. It is a brief interval ; an interval really brief *to all*, however early in the world's history they may have died, as compared with the everlasting kingdom. But promise crowds on promise to describe their glory in the day of their Lord's return and of their resurrection. Hence true faith in these revelations of glory leads to earnest longing and waiting for Christ. This blessed hope becomes all the salva-

tion and all the desire of the soul, for which the believer is intently looking. Nothing nearer, nothing lower, will satisfy its thirst for full unfailing happiness. The gathering together of all the family of God from all ages and all countries, kindreds, and tongues; the resurrection of all who have died in the Lord, and the change of the living saints, and their being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, the reward of all their works of love, the royal priesthood unto God and the Father given to them, the restitution of all things, the millennial kingdom, succeeded by the everlasting kingdom in which God is all in all; the visible glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being with him, and beholding his glory, and seeing God himself as he is, face to face. O brethren, what a prospect of bliss and glory is here! These things form a solid hope of *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, that dazzles by its intense brightness; and yet, when in lively faith we view it, when we gaze on it in believing admiration and gratitude, it is a hope that attracts the soul into its own glory, and raises us up together with Christ and makes us sit together in heavenly places.

Thus we have shewn at length that waiting for Christ's coming and kingdom is a necessary fruit of the Gospel fully received.

Let us proceed to consider

II. THE SOLEMN TRUTHS BY WHICH THIS DUTY IS IN OUR TEXT ENFORCED.

To wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

There are three great truths which are added by the Apostle to impress more powerfully on our minds this duty of waiting.

1. THE WRATH FROM WHICH CHRIST HAS DELIVERED HIS PEOPLE.—The whole history of our world displays the wrath of God against transgressors. We may see this in the deluge, the confounding of tongues at Babel, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of the seven nations of Canaan, the punishments of Israel again and again, and their captivities, the desolation of the African and Eastern Churches by Saracens and Turks, and the vials of wrath on Western Christendom. These things have already visibly manifested it in this world. But a more fearful wrath still is yet to come. There is now daily by impenitent transgressors a *treasuring up of wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*. This is reserved for them *who are contentious and do not obey the truth ; but obey unrighteousness*—it is even *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and*

also of the Gentile. (Rom. ii. 5—10.) This wrath has various manifestations in this world and also in that which is to come; but they all seem comprehended under the one term, the day of wrath, though that be an eternal day of misery to the perseveringly wicked as it is of glory to the righteous: (*ἡμεραν αἰῶνος*, 2 Pet. iii. 18.) This day, as it regards the Jewish nation, began *in wars and rumours of wars, in famines, pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places*, which our Lord calls *the beginning of sorrows*; and so, we may suppose, it will be as it regards Christendom, according to the many predictions yet unfulfilled of the great tribulation. But its issue to the impenitent is *the lake of fire burning with brimstone* (Rev. xix. 20), and being *tormented day and night for ever and ever*. The children of light, the children of the day, who have put on *the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation*, are wholly delivered from all this wrath, even though they may, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, be for a brief season in the furnace. They who believe in Jesus *shall not perish, but have everlasting life. God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.* Rescued already by our blessed Redeemer, from so deep a ruin as the impending wrath of God; having already the forgiveness of our sins,

the freedom from the dominion and love of sin, and the hope of coming glory; how should we long for our Redeemer's return to complete the work, the great work of our salvation, to deliver us wholly from that body of death under which we now groan, with all its temptations, fears, sins, and sorrows, and to carry us safely and triumphantly above the coming wrath to his heavenly kingdom. We may say, in the confidence of faith, *Though I walk in the midst of trouble thou wilt revive me—thy right hand shall save me, the Lord shall perfect that which concerneth me.* (Psalm cxxxviii. 7, 8.)

2. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD is another blessed truth, impressing on us the duty of waiting for Christ. The Apostle here beautifully introduces the fact that Jesus is risen from the dead, to lead our minds to that victory in which all who believe in him have so large a share. He is the *first begotten from the dead; he is the first-fruits of them that slept*, and his resurrection has secured ours. *When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.* A subtle criticism, full though it may be of much ingenuity and straining of the chief texts which prove the doctrine,* can never get over the

* I allude here to a very painful and distressing work,

plain, palpable meaning of the words of our Lord, *The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation ;* or the statements of the Apostle in the 15th of the 1st Corinthians. The time of the resurrection is connected with the return of our Lord. *The Lord himself shall descend*

written by an American divine, of whom, from other writings, better things might have been expected, "Anastasis, or the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body Rationally and Scripturally Considered, by George Bush, Professor of Hebrew, New York City University." It is a learned and argumentative treatise to set aside wholly the doctrines of the future literal resurrection of the body and of a day of general judgment. His course of reasoning is very instructive as to the danger of rationalistic theology. His leading argument is from reason, and then his labour is to make Scripture bend to it ; and the issue is the denial of fundamental doctrines, with many vain efforts at the same time to preserve their moral and spiritual power. I would earnestly warn Christian readers against these views. They are the more dangerous from the learning and pious sentiments, and candour of mind with which they are stated. But I doubt not God will soon furnish his Church with sufficient replies by men competent to the task, and will, by the very controversy, give a fuller development to his own truth, as we see was the case in the Apostolic age. (2 Tim. ii. 16—19 ; 1 Cor. xv.)

—*and the dead in Christ shall rise first.* Thus the hope of the Redeemer's return is rich with immortality and glory. It is a hope over which corruption and the grave have no power. It is a hope of full acceptance in the day of judgment, and unspeakable rewards of grace in everlasting blessedness. The Saviour, for whom we wait, has sounded all the depths of human sorrow: he for us has been in agony inconceivable, sweating great drops of blood; he for us was forsaken on the cross; he for us poured out his soul unto death; he for us was buried in the grave, descended into hell, and at length rose again for our justification. And shall we not long to see him in his glory, and be altogether like him and with him there for ever? It was love to us that carried him through all these sorrows. And, oh, what depths and heights, and lengths and breadths of love are there in store for those who wait for him and *attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* Of all the longings of the human heart this may well be accounted the most reasonable, the most sublime, the most holy, and the most scriptural.

3. THE PLACE FROM WHICH HE RETURNS, EVEN HEAVEN ITSELF, is another truth which the Apostle mentions to quicken our waiting for him. Christ, at his ascension, *entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.* Jesus,

the Son of God, therefore comes from Heaven itself for us, to gather all his people into one mass. He went thither on purpose to prepare a place for us, and assured us before he went, *If I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.* (John xiv. 3.) It is perfectly clear then that the saints shall be translated and ascend to be with Christ in heavenly mansions, in the *city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* (Heb. xi. 10.) However they may reign over and bless the earth, their proper home is heaven. They have a portion and a place in heaven itself. As the Apostle speaks, *we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* (2 Cor. v. 1.) We may well be lost in admiration when we contemplate that height of glory to which our Lord shall bring his people. It is his own declaration, in solemn prayer to his Father in Heaven, *The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold thy glory, which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.* (John xvii. 22—24.) What mysteries of eternal goodness will then open

to our view! O my brethren, what will it be, what must it be, to see God as he is, to behold him face to face, to know as we are known: to be equal with the angels and their companions; to have all the powers of glorious resurrection bodies and perfected spirits, and all the spiritual beauty of our Divine Immanuel, in being like him and sharing his glory, and all the blessedness of communicating heavenly blessings to others, as kings and priests unto God and his Father! All our thoughts are overwhelmed in these unutterably glorious, and splendid hopes! We can only exclaim, in the words of inspiration, *In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures, for with thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light.* With such glowing hopes to be fulfilled at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, how can we but wait with intense eagerness and outstretched neck, and panting desires for his coming, purifying ourselves as he is pure, and *giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.* (Col.i.12, 13.)

We will now proceed to consider,

III. THE PRACTICE OF THIS BLESSED DUTY OF WAITING FOR CHRIST AT THIS TIME.

We see from our text and many similar passages of Scripture, that it has from the beginning of the Gospel, been the privilege and duty of Christians, and that of the highest character, to wait for the Lord's coming.

But as century after century has rolled away, and the Lord has not yet appeared, as hope is deferred, and the spirit is ready to fail, we have special need of watchfulness and prayer, *My soul panteth for thy salvation, but I hope in thy word.* In that word there is ample encouragement and a sure light. We see one Christian prophecy after another has been accomplishing, in a larger fulness of meaning than could previously have been imagined. We see all the signs that indicate the nearness of his return appearing, and but little indeed remains yet to be accomplished before his return. Hence the privilege and duty of waiting, instead of becoming enfeebled and weakened by the lengthened interval, become of more urgent importance, and of deeper and fuller and more intense and stirring interest, as time rolls on and the great event draws nigh.

Let me, then, now endeavour to lay it practi-

cally before you, in a way that may daily help the exercises of your own mind in fulfilling this duty.

And here I would first notice THE ERRORS TO BE AVOIDED on the right hand and on the left. We must not be shaken in mind with ideas of an instant coming, or any coming at a precise time that men may absolutely fix. The Lord has especially guarded his people against the delusions by which they might otherwise, in this way, have been seduced. He solemnly declares, *Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.* The first Christians at Thessalonica fell into mistake on this very point, and needed this entreaty of the apostle, *Now we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand ; or instantly present.* (2 Thess. ii. 1, 2.) In consequence of their disregarding the hiddenness of the time many had walked disorderly, and neglected their work and occupation. The prevalence of this error has given occasion to Infidels in every age to blaspheme the word of prophecy, and has proved a stumbling-block in the way of the recep-

tion of the truth of the Lord's coming, and the duty of waiting. This error has been largely revived among Christians in America, and is spreading at this time in our country. As the Lord's watchman, then, I warn you against fixing a precise time, seeing he has purposely withheld this knowledge from us.

But we must still more warn you against the contrast errors of the evil servant, who says in his heart, *My Lord delayeth his coming* ; and of the scoffers, who in scorn ask, *Where is the promise of his coming* ? These are yet more serious and fatal errors, and have much more awful threatenings joined to them. *The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites : then shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* It is a part of the same error to despise chronological prophecies, and determine to have nothing to do with dates ; though God has revealed them for our use, and they are a great help to watchfulness and expectation, and discerning the signs of the times. But this part of the subject is reserved to a beloved brother who will dwell on the right knowledge of the times and seasons. In opposition to both these errors is the true duty of the Lord's watchman, and the true

position of the believer, as exemplified in Habakkuk. *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what the Lord will say unto me. Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; for it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him, but the just shall live by faith.* (Hab. ii. 1—4.)

I would now proceed to give some practical directions for your guidance.

1. EXERCISE FAITH IN THE DIVINE TESTIMONY CONCERNING THE LORD'S COMING, AS A CERTAIN, APPROACHING, AND NOW NEAR EVENT. The personal coming of our Lord from heaven, where he now is, in glorified humanity to this our earth, is absolutely CERTAIN. Nothing in heaven and earth can be more so. Our Lord pledges his veracity for it in the most solemn manner: *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.* (Matt. xxiv. 35; Mark xiii. 31; Luke xxi. 33.) It is often mentioned with a special call to attention, thus, *Behold, I come quickly; surely, I come quickly*: as if to remove any lingering doubts that the delay might occasion. It is one of the surest of all truths that our Lord will return

from heaven in like manner as he ascended. (Acts i. 11.) The whole voice of the Church in its creeds, is here unanimous. And as it is certain, so it is ever APPROACHING nearer and nearer. Each year, each month, each Sabbath, each day, and each hour, shortens the intervening time. Each sacrament, as it is repeated, tells us of its approach. The Lord's Supper is appointed to *show forth the Lord's death till he come*. Each baptism is a figure of the coming regeneration of the earth. Even in the days of the apostle he tells the Roman converts, after they had believed, but a few years, *now is our salvation nearer than when we believed : the night is far spent, the day is at hand*. It ought, then, by us now especially to be viewed as very NEAR : yes, considering the magnitude of the event, and all its issue, and the shortness of the interval as compared with the past 1,800 years, as close at hand, even at the doors. Our chief guides here are the prophecies of Daniel and the book of Revelation, connected with the signs of the times. And let any one diligently read the opening out of these books in the writings of those faithful men who have patiently studied the subject in our own day, and in our own country, Faber, Cuninghame, Frere, Habershon, Birks, and Elliott, with others who have gone before them, and whatever differences,

more or less material, there may be in their views, he must see that little yet remains to be fulfilled before the Lord's appearance. Many who have deeply studied the subject fully believe, and I cannot but concur with them, that we are in the last period of the fourth great empire, just previous to the Lord's return as revealed to Daniel, that six out of the seven seals of Revelation have been opened, six out of the seven trumpets have sounded, six out of the seven vials have been poured out. The Lord's return is also, as many of us believe, nearly connected with the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet, and the seventh vial. We believe, also, that the chief prophetical dates that were to intervene have either run their course or are nearly closing. In the strength, then, of all these prophecies, and in the manifest and peculiar signs of the times, continually awakening general attention, but needing the sure lamp of prophecy, shining in our dark world, to give us true light; we call you, my brethren, to exercise faith in the Lord's coming, not only as certain and approaching, but also as near. We believe that we may, with a strength of emphasis that could not before have been used, say to all, *Stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Behold, the Judge standeth before the door.*

2. REGARD THE LORD'S COMING RATHER THAN DEATH AS THE GREAT EVENT FOR WHICH YOU ARE TO PREPARE. No one can have studied the New Testament with a reference to this subject, without discerning how seldom death is referred to as a motive for watchfulness and preparation, in comparison of the quick and sudden coming of Christ. Death, in this view, is not wholly lost sight of. We are assured *it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.* But again and again we are charged to watch, to be also ready, to take heed, to watch and pray always, under the conviction that in such an hour as we think not the Son of Man cometh. This peculiarity in the language of the Holy Spirit must have a deep meaning and infinite wisdom. Our minds ought to be conformed to these directions. They do not imply that death is not decisive of our state for ever, the end of the time of probation and of the day of grace. These truths are made clear by other Scriptures. But they do manifestly teach us that it is more important and more practically profitable to our souls to fix our eyes and our hopes and our aims on the Lord's coming, rather than on death. That if we would be quickened by the most powerful and stirring motives; if we would be animated by the brightest hopes; if we would have most prominently before our

mind the final issues of everything in which we now engage, of every thought, word, and work, we must be looking for and expecting and preparing continually for the great day of his appearing. True it is, that it has been delayed season after season in which Christians have thought that it would take place; true it is, that there have been periods in the past history of the Church when expectation of his immediate coming was general, and he did not come. But all this is provided for in the directions of our Lord. He tells us, *Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for your Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.* (Luke xii. 35—38.) In the time of our Lord the night was divided into four watches. In the night of his Church, from his absence, he might have been expected at any watch. But special seasons when he was looked for having passed, we must not slumber, but increase our vigilance,

if we would have this special blessing at his return.

3. VIEW THE LORD'S COMING AS INFINITELY DESIRABLE. Let it enter into all your best wishes; let it form a part of your constant prayers. In this way it is ever presented to the children of God in the holy Scriptures. It is *the marriage supper of the Lamb*, and *blessed are they which are called to it*. He is set before them in the most attractive of all characters, as the coming Bridegroom. The bride longs for the beloved bridegroom. We are told, *Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation*. They are described as *looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God*. The most careful discrimination in those passages which are full of terror to the wicked, is continually made between the effect of his appearance, to his enemies and to his people: *say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense, he will come and save you*. (Isa. xxxv. 4.) He is described as *mighty to save*, at the very time that he is described as *trampling on his enemies in his fury*, when the *day of vengeance* is in his heart, at that very time,

the year of his redeemed is come. (Isa. lxiii. 1—4.) The day which burns *as an oven*, and in which *the proud and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble*, is the very time in which it is said, *Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings.* (Mal. iv. 1—3.)

True it is, if we have the mind of God, we have no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked ; we now yearn over them, we long for their salvation ; we entreat them to be reconciled to God. But seeing that allowed sin and wickedness continually increases, and is the real source of every kind of evil, and that in the mind of infinite wisdom and love there is no other remedy for those evils, and that this remedy will be effectual to subdue all iniquity and to bring in universally that kingdom, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, we have in this also, oneness of mind with God.* The honour of

* I quote here, from a sermon of Martin Luther's, on Luke xxi. 25—28, the following striking remarks:—"Although it is by no means a small grief unto good Christians to consider in their minds such a destruction of the world, (for they feel a distress at the perishing of the wicked,) yet Christ would call them away from so doing, by these words, thereby shewing them that they should rather consider the necessity of their redemption than the greatness of the destruction of the wicked." And after dwelling upon this, he says, "Where-

God's name and the welfare of his people being infinitely dear to us, and their sufferings at the last being, as we have reason to expect, peculiarly severe, this day becomes infinitely desirable for the putting an end to iniquity, for the hallowing of God's name, for the coming of his happy kingdom, and the doing of his will on earth as it is in heaven. It is the day of the full redemption of God's people, putting an end for ever, as it regards them, to death and sorrow and crying and pain and the curse: clothing them with the resurrection body and the perfected spirit;

fore if there be any feeling of compassion in thy heart, rather pity the afflicted Christians, who are compelled to endure so many wounds and evils from the world; or rather pity the Gospel and the most holy name of Christ and of God, in which thou hast been baptized and called unto the fellowship of eternal life, which name the ungodly in this world blasphemously spit upon, despise, trample under foot, persecute, and ignominiously and insultingly lacerate. For what would that compassion be that should lead us to pity such impious murderers, who know no repentance, who will not become better, nor cease from their malice before they perish utterly, and all hope of their repentance be at an end for ever? Are we to suffer the thrice-holy name of God and of Christ and of everything else which belongs to them, to be treated thus ignominiously, basely, and criminally? Are we to do it that the kingdom of the devil might thereby stand and be established, and prevail, and the kingdom of God be oppressed and overcome?"

admitting them for ever to the heavenly mansions and the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and into that city which the glory of God lightens and the Lamb is the light thereof, for ever and ever. With regard to the mind of the Church on this subject, we have it beautifully set forth in some of the last expressions recorded in Scripture of that Church ; addressing Christ, it is said, *the Spirit and the Bride say, Come ;* and addressing every hearer around us, the Church says, *Let him that heareth say, Come ;* and in this day of grace, while it continues, the Church addresses the whole human race, *Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely ;* let him share all our hopes and all our blessings. And yet farther, when the Saviour re-echoes again this testimony from heaven, saying, *Surely I come quickly,* the Church reiterates the longings of a renewed heart, *Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.* Thus the daily prayer, the chief request of each child of God, is, *Thy kingdom come.*

4. SEE THAT THIS WAITING FOR CHRIST HAS ITS RIGHT PRACTICAL INFLUENCE BY INCREASING YOUR SPIRITUALITY AND HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS. Thus it is used in the holy Scriptures. This hope may be received merely in the intellect and imagination as an interesting and impressive subject without sanctifying the heart. In this way received,

it may fill us with dogmatic, positive assumptions, fancied superior knowledge, and cause us to despise more devoted brethren who may not yet see this hope, and thus occasion many stumbling-blocks to its reception. This is a painful abuse of this deep scriptural truth. Its real use is to raise us continually heavenward, as the apostle teaches. *Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.* (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) All Christians quickened together with Christ by the Spirit of God, are now *raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* (Ephes. ii. 6.) The Lord's coming is revealed to bring us to this state of mind. *Set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* (Col. iii. 2—4.) The Apostle John joins the same hope with more close abiding in Jesus and increasing purity. *He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.* (1 John ii. 28, 29; iii. 1—3.) The more assuredly you can realize in your minds God's testimony to this truth, and the more steadily you can gaze on this blessed hope,

looking for it and hasting unto it, the more you will be raised above earthborn cares, sorrows, and troubles, and your heart opened to noble and generous actings for God and his Church. You will be filled with scriptural and bright anticipations of heavenly glory. Its holy joy and happiness will be reflected in heavenly-mindedness, deadness to the world, Christian tempers, holy dispositions, and all the fruit of the Spirit, so that you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and *the joy of the Lord shall be your strength* for every work tending to glorify his name and bless your fellow-men.

Lastly, LET US CONFESS THIS HOPE OF OUR LORD'S COMING BEFORE THE WORLD. Why has it yet had so little influence? We have been too much ashamed of our hope, and have hid our light under a bushel. Why has it not yet roused, to any great extent, the mocks of the scorner and the revilings of the world? The voice of testimony has hitherto been so feeble that the world has had no occasion to trouble itself about it: the world has not been disturbed in its false peace. Why is it carefully excluded from the mass of our religious periodicals and journals?*

* The unbroken silence of all our religious periodicals and journals on this great hope of the Church, is one of the dark signs of the times as to the trials through which the Church

testimony to it, from those who hold it, has hitherto been so indistinct, that the conductors of

must yet pass. There have been various attempts to break this silence, and there are at this day minor periodical papers upon it, in my view however, mingled with many errors. To the honour of the Plymouth brethren, though I materially differ from them in their peculiarities, they have ever prominently and distinctly stated this hope, and fully, and generally scripturally, brought it forward. This truth gives strength to that body of Christians. I do not see that this doctrine can, however, be wisely and effectually stated, according to the whole Scripture testimony, but as it is joined with these four things,—(1.) A future millennium; (2.) The pre-millennial advent; (3.) The political restoration of Israel; and, (4.) The general Protestant application of the Apocalypse;—a periodical, which agreeing in these grounds of union, viewed this subject practically and devotionally; argumentatively, but not exclusively or dogmatically, would be a great blessing to the Church at this time. There have been, indeed, so many crude things, so many jarring opinions, so much serious error, (as in the case of Mr. Irving,) so many false anticipations and pretensions, that I do not wonder, though I grieve over the silence, of our religious periodicals on the best hope of the people of God. It may be a great lesson to all of us, who are looking for it, to endeavour so to bring it forward that we may fulfil that instruction which just precedes the apostle's direction to be looking for it: *In doctrine shewing uncorruptedness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.* (Titus ii. 7—13.)

such publications have no idea of the strength of conviction with which it is held by the faithful servants of Christ. We must be more open, bold, and decided in our profession, if we would make a real impression on the whole Church of Christ. Our blessed Master has told us, *Let your lights be burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.* This implies an open confession of our hope of his return. *With the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* This is one purpose which he has in view in our attendance on the Lord's Supper, to testify to others our hope that he who died for us will come again. And be it so that we meet with ridicule and reproach from even professing Christians for this confession, let us take up this cross also. No doubt Noah had many a scoff and many a mockery to endure, while engaged for 120 years in building the ark; yet *by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* All the extravagancies which, through the special enmity of Satan against this truth, any who may have professed it, may at any time have mingled with it, will be very possibly laid to our charge. There is no doctrine against which that malignant

adversary seems to have had more hatred, nor any which he has more striven to mix up with human infirmity. But the holy Bible ever leads us to combine true sobriety and moderation with the Lord's being at hand. *Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.* Again, we are told, *Wherefore be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* And again, *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.* Thus entirely separated from all enthusiasm, and thus intimately associated with all truth and sober-mindedness, in the holy Scriptures, is that doctrine of the Lord's speedy return and our waiting for him which we have now set before you. Let us not, then, be ashamed of our hope. Let us avow it before all men.

Indeed, these are the truths eminently suited to the very times through which we are passing ; exactly calculated to meet all the errors and iniquities, the Infidelity, the Popery, and the lawlessness of these days. If God have given us this sure light in a dark place, let us lift it on high, and *shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life.* This is the seasonable truth for the people of Christ now ; it is given by Christ himself, in a

voice from heaven, in the account of the sixth vial, under which we are now living, *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.* It is, then, clearly according to the mind of Christ that it should be distinctly announced and fully proclaimed. I call upon all his servants then, in the name of the great Lord and Master of all, to testify their hope of his return. *Confess him before men, and he will confess you before the angels of God ; yea, before his Father in heaven. Thus, when he shall appear, you shall have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

LECTURE II.

THE FULL EXERCISE OF HOPE IN THE COMING OF CHRIST.

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1 THESS. II. 19.

“ For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming ? ”

WHAT a depth of earnestness marks these questions! What affection glowed in the Apostle's breast towards those Thessalonian believers to whom they were addressed! What a lively hope animated him concerning their eternal welfare! Though absent in body, he was not absent from them in heart; and, when prevented from fulfilling his wish of going to Thessalonica, the deep interest which he took in their spiritual prosperity prompted

him to write this Epistle. He assures them in it, that what he knew and heard of their character convinced him that they were of the number of God's elect; he cheers their spirits under the grievous trials to which, for Christ's sake, they were subjected; and encourages them to persevere in the path in which they were walking, and which, rugged as it might be, would, in God's time, lead to glory and honour and immortality. His hope of them was stedfast; and, though not now permitted to speak with them face to face, he looked forward to the time when their trials and perils should have passed away as the summer-cloud, and they should meet together, and ministers and people should receive a full reward. The time, on which his eye was fixed, was that period, determined on in the counsels of God, when the high destinies of His Church shall be consummated, her warfare accomplished, her holiness and happiness perfected. It was the period so often spoken of in the New Testament, as furnishing the strongest motives to obedience, the most sustaining encouragements under trials, and the richest consolation in disappointments and sorrows. It was the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, if not before, would he and his beloved Thessalonian brethren meet; and who could fully understand what his feelings would then be? *What is our hope, or joy,*

or crown of rejoicing? he asks. *Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?* What a prospect do the Apostle's words open out to us of that triumphant day, when faithful ministers and faithful people shall meet together in the presence of their glorious Redeemer, and realize in His kingdom the fulfilment of their largest and brightest hopes! May our gracious God give us His Holy Ghost while we meditate on this portion of His Word, and enable us so to fix our thoughts and direct our steps, in reference to that momentous period, that we may *see the good of His chosen, rejoice in the gladness of His nation, and glory with His inheritance!*

I. Let me, first, call your attention to THE APOSTLE'S MINISTRY AT THESSALONICA.

The history, Acts xvii., informs us, that the unbelieving Jews at Thessalonica excited such a persecution against Paul and Silas that they were compelled to make their escape by night, and to flee to the neighbouring city of Berea. The Apostle, both in that and many other places which he visited, was in a state of great personal danger: *in prisons frequent, in deaths oft.* Yet *none of those things moved him*: having a commission from the Lord Jesus to testify His Gospel to the Gentiles, he persevered in the plain path of duty,

trusting to his Master to preserve him from the fury of Jews and Gentiles. Confidence in Christ inspired him with courage, and strengthened his heart.

But observe the character of his ministry. He refers to it in the commencement of this Epistle ; and there is a remarkable openness and honesty in his allusions to this subject which characterize a man conscious that he is speaking to those who knew the truth of what he said.

We notice his FIDELITY. What more needful than this in a *steward of the mysteries of Christ* ? *It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.* That such was his character, he appeals to the brethren at Thessalonica. *Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile ; but, as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ.* There was fidelity in his motives. No selfish or carnal ends influenced him. There was no secret leaven of covetousness working within, no desire after the worthless idol of human applause, but an honest endeavour to approve himself to God. There was fidelity in

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the delivery of his message. As a messenger, *allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel*, he dared neither to add to, nor diminish from it.

His doctrine was Christ—Christ crucified, the one foundation of the sinner's justification before God, to the utter exclusion of man's works or merits; Christ glorified as Head over all things to his Church, the prevailing Intercessor, to the exclusion of all imagined mediators, and the Dispenser of the Holy Ghost for the quickening, sanctifying, and comforting of all the elect people of God; Christ coming in glory as the Judge of quick and dead, to destroy every Infidel and anti-Christian power, to put an end to the usurped empire of the devil, to perfect the holiness and blessedness of His Church, and to establish His kingdom over the whole earth. Christ in His person, His offices, His grace, was the sun of his system, the Light and Life and Glory throughout, the Alpha and Omega of his ministerial teaching.

The Apostle was, further, distinguished by his TENDERNESS AND LOVE. *We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.* My brethren, there is sometimes a severity of temper, a repulsiveness of manner, a defect of

courtesy, or a want of sympathy connected with a faithful ministry of God's Word. But there was an absence of these in the Apostle Paul. The time during which he continued at Thessalonica appears to have been less than a month. Many among those who had for the first time heard the Gospel from his lips were probably weak in faith, like little children, unable to go alone, and greatly needing the encouraging voice, and the helping hand of their spiritual Father. And they found in the Apostle the affection and tenderness of a parent. Like his Divine Master, he knew how to condescend to their weakness. He did not expect everything at once. Like a skilful husbandman, he waited for the precious fruit, employing his knowledge and using his skill in nursing up the tender plants of righteousness till, having derived from the Holy Ghost increasing strength, and taken deeper root, they might be able to stand against the blasts of temptation. So great was his affection for them, that his life was at their service, and he was willing to spend it for their benefit.

Nor must we pass over his DISINTERESTEDNESS. Though he might, as the Apostle of Christ, have acted on the principle laid down by our blessed Lord, *The labourer is worthy of his hire*, yet he waived his just right, and *laboured night and day that he might not be chargeable to any of them*,

while engaged in preaching the Gospel of Christ. What a living witness for Christ in conduct, as well as in doctrine, in a heathen land! How evident must it have been to all that he *sought not* theirs, but them! Far be it from us to indulge in anything like an arithmetical calculation as to the workings of God's grace in the conversion of sinners; but when we see such an apostle sent forth to minister among the Gentiles, endowed with such eminent graces, and following so closely in the steps of his Divine Master, we cannot be surprised that He who sent him forth should bestow such an abundant blessing on his abundant labours, and honour him as the successful messenger of mercy to many precious souls.

II. We notice, secondly, the apostle's EXPECTED REWARD. *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?* He had, doubtless, a present reward in the success which crowned his labours. *The work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope*, which distinguished the Christians at Thessalonica, must have yielded no ordinary gratification to his mind, and called forth his repeated thanksgivings to God. But whatever present joy he felt at their conversion was but the earnest of what he expected at

the coming of Christ. Conversant as he was with the things of the unseen world, and having a realizing apprehension of them, he expected the full reward of his labours in that day when every man's work shall be tried by the Omniscient Judge. The consciousness that he had faithfully delivered the message with which he had been intrusted ; the conviction that he was, therefore, *pure from the blood of all* among whom he had preached the Gospel of Christ ; and the prospect of being able to present many seals of his ministry as the living witnesses of his diligence in his Master's service, led him to rejoice in the thought of that day as the crowning period of his brightest hopes, when the Chief Shepherd should publicly express His approbation of His servant's labours, and bid him enter into His eternal joy. When we contemplate the effects of the Apostle's personal ministry at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and other places, and the extent to which God honoured him *in taking out of the Gentiles, a people for his name*, we feel unable to form any adequate idea of his joy at beholding all these gathered together at the coming of Christ, owned as His people, and welcomed to His kingdom. And, when we further consider the multiplying power, so to speak, of the Apostle's labours, the ministers raised up by

his instrumentality, and the converts to whom their ministry was blessed, the thought is overpowering, and we feel that imagination cannot reach to more than a fraction of the vast reality.

In perusing these Epistles to the Church at Thessalonica, we find mention made of several facts connected with the coming of Christ, which seem to have been present to the Apostle's mind when speaking of these Christians *as his crown of rejoicing*.

One of these was, *rest* for the Church from *all its troubles*. *In the world ye shall have tribulation*, is the language of Christ to His people; and the Thessalonians, in common with others, found this to be their portion. It was not to be expected but that, when an inroad was made on the devil's empire, his malice would be excited. And so it was. The signal of persecution was raised against the Thessalonian converts: their own countrymen, at the instigation of the evil spirit, rose up against them; and, though we know not the precise nature and extent of their sufferings, we gather from St. Paul's language that it was a time of grievous tribulation. But a limit, in God's appointed time, would be put to this. The period was fixed, in His unerring counsels, when vengeance would overtake the persecutors, if they repented not of their sin, and *rest* would be the portion, the

eternal portion of them who now were suffering for righteousness' sake. The coming of Christ would be the season of that rest. *To you who are troubled*, says the Apostle, *rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ : who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power ; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day.*

Dear as these brethren were to his heart, he looked forward to the appearing of Christ as the time of rest and deliverance to those who were now in the furnace of tribulation. And, while the sympathies of his heart were drawn out towards them, he rejoiced in the thought that there was One who watched over them, overruled all events for their good, and would cause this affliction, severe as it now was, to work for them *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

Another subject, mentioned by the Apostle in the fourth chapter of this Epistle, is the gathering together of all the servants of Christ at the advent of their Lord, whether they have previously departed, or shall be then alive on the earth. Between the time of his first going to Thessalonica

and writing this Epistle, some, it appears from his language, had *fallen asleep*. Their surviving friends, sorrowing for their departure, needed consolation, and St. Paul thus comforts them, *I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* But what of the saints then living? Shall they again see their departed friends? Hear the Apostle's words. *The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* O blessed prospect for the Church of Christ in her present militant condition! O glorious hope for them who, though enabled by the grace of God to triumph over death themselves, are nevertheless repeatedly reminded of their fallen state by his frequent incursions on their neighbourhoods and families! In some sense we may each of us say, *I die daily*. The most endearing ties of social and domestic life are snapped asunder by this relentless enemy; and often, ere one wound is scarcely healed, another is inflicted. But the hope of the believer at the coming of Jesus is a triumphant hope. *Then shall be brought to pass*

the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The risen saints, called forth from their graves by the Lord of life, shall die no more; their spirits and bodies shall be re-united; the bodies of the saints still alive shall be changed; the bodies of all the disciples of Christ made like unto His glorious body; and the whole company shall for ever be with their Lord, —their holiness, their glory, their happiness, final, complete, eternal.

There is yet another event, which the Apostle, in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonian Church, connects with the glorious advent of the Lord Jesus. Speaking of *the man of sin*, he says that *the Lord shall consume him with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming*. Time does not allow us, nor is the present a suitable occasion, to enter into any lengthened argument as to the power here designated by the appellation of *the man of sin*. But, when we consider the distinctive marks by which he is described—as apostatizing from the true faith; as opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; as sitting in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God; as coming after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, we can

scarcely hesitate, with Mede and most of our ablest commentators, to understand by the man of sin the Papacy and its abominations, in protesting against which our martyred forefathers shed their blood. The sufferings of the saints of Christ under the tyranny of the man of sin, and the souls that have perished by his delusions, constitute a vast amount of guilt, and will bring down, as Holy Scripture informs us, the signal judgments of God on this enemy of His Church. *As the mystery of iniquity* was already working in St. Paul's time, he doubtless felt a tender anxiety for the Thessalonians lest they should be injured by it; and, having its true character revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, he could not but rejoice in the prospect of the complete destruction of this destroyer at the coming of the Son of Man. What a blessed and glorious prospect this! The utter removal of this enemy of God and His Church, the up-rooting of the usurped empire of Satan, and the establishment of the rightful Sovereign in His dominion, will be hailed by angels and saints with rapturous delight, and the universal chorus will vibrate on every heart, as it is swelled by every tongue, *Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*

III. Let us, in conclusion, endeavour PRACTICALLY TO APPLY THE SUBJECT.

The reward, expected by the Apostle Paul,

will, in a lower degree, be enjoyed by every faithful minister of Christ. What a quickening motive to us, brethren and fellow-ministers, to inquire whether our character is marked by fidelity as Paul's was!—whether we preach the same Gospel as he preached! Happy are we if our consciences bear us witness that we are thus followers of him; since it is to our fidelity, not to our success, that the reward is promised. But have we not reason, in these perilous days, to be very jealous over ourselves, lest, either from not firmly grasping the truth in our minds, or from personal regard, or from a weak desire to conciliate, we should be led aside from that Gospel,—*the Gospel*, let me remind you, *of the grace of God*,—which Paul preached? We know with what earnestness he withstood those who were in authority in the Church, when he *saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel*. Let his example stimulate us to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*. Let us be careful in all our ministerial labours, whether in public or in private, to maintain it. And how shall we do this but by keeping close to the inspired Word of God? My brethren, if Christ be not set forth as the only ground on which a sinful man can be justified before God; if man's works are set up in union with Christ's

merits as his title to acceptance; if Christ be nominally, but the Church really, made the head of authority; if the efficacy of the Sacraments be made to depend on some alleged inherent power in themselves rather than on the right reception of them; if greater stress be laid on the circumstantial and externals of religion than on the spirit and power of it; if so-called catholic antiquity be regarded as the standard of truth instead of the higher antiquity of that Word which was given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost for our instruction; then, assuredly, we preach not the Gospel which Paul preached. And what, let me ask you, will be the result of such teaching? We may succeed in gathering together some who will show great zeal for the outside of religion, but where will be the precious souls for our *hope*, our *joy*, our *crown of rejoicing*, at the coming of Christ? Nothing but *the truth as it is in Jesus* can nourish the immortal soul; and if we have fed men with husks, instead of with the bread of life, what wonder if they perish! Let me, in connexion with this topic, fasten on your minds, and on my own, the awakening words of the Apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 11—15, *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's*

work shall be made manifest : for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire ; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire. God endue us with His Holy Ghost, that we may be wise master-builders, laying the right foundation, and raising on it a superstructure that will endure the fire !

Do we also preach the Gospel in the spirit of the Gospel, with the disinterestedness, the tenderness, the love of St. Paul? Austerity, want of sympathy, and, above all, want of love, are sad hindrances to success, were the Gospel preached even by an angel's tongue. How important, therefore, the inquiry, whether we are apostolical in character as well as in doctrine ! whether we preach the Gospel of Christ in the spirit of Christ !

My beloved brethren and fellow-Christians, what an inexpressibly momentous period both to ministers and people is the return of our Lord ! From the thought of that dreadful doom which awaits the unfaithful minister and unfaithful hearer the mind recoils with instinctive horror. God grant that it may never be realised by any

here present! But what imagination can comprehend the blessed realization of the hopes of ministers and people who are truly Christ's! *I saw thrones*, says the Apostle John, *and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, nor in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* Such is the glorious reward of those who have confessed the Name of Jesus, and borne testimony to His truth, either by suffering for His sake, or by refusing to receive the mark of the beast. And what a reward!—how surpassing all that man could conceive! To reign with Christ, to be His assessors in judgment, to sit with Him on His throne, to behold His glory, to live in the eternal sunshine of His love, is the rich inheritance of them to whose souls the faithful ministry of the Gospel has been blessed, and to whom it has come, not *in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.* What wonderful honour, what amazing blessedness! Let us, however, recollect, beloved brethren, that the crown is preceded by the cross, that we must be *crucified with Christ* to sin, to self, to

the world, if we would reign with Christ in glory.

And oh! how unspeakable the reward of him whose faithful labours, in that part of the vineyard which Christ has assigned to him, have, under God, been instrumental to this blessed result! Imagine a holy band of Christian brethren gathered together with their beloved pastor at the appearing of Jesus Christ. What an overcoming joy and thankfulness will swell his delighted breast as he surveys them taking their places among the sheep of Christ at the right hand of the King! Some, perhaps, over whom, when weak in faith, his bowels yearned with parental tenderness; some whom, when erring, he reproved; others whom, when in danger, he warned; others whom, when in sorrow, he comforted; and others, the steadfastness of whose faith and whose peaceful falling asleep in Jesus, filled his soul with elevated joy; all now brought *in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, and forming part of that blessed and glorious assembly, concerning which, as he presents them faultless before the presence of His Father, the Divine Redeemer will say, *Lo, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me.*

My brethren, let us not be contented with looking at and admiring this picture; let us give diligence that we may attain its reality. Let us *gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace which is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Let us keep the end in view, subordinating to it all our pursuits, and living each day, and performing each duty, as men who are waiting for their Master's coming. *If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.* The death to sin, the denial of self, must precede the life of glory; and *to them that thus look for him, will he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

LECTURE III.

ABOUNDING LOVE THE PREPARATION FOR THE ADVENT.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM NIVEN,

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1 THESS. III. 12, 13.

*“ And the Lord make you to increase and abound
in love one toward another, and toward all men,
even as we do toward you : To the end he may
stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness
before God, even our Father, at the coming of
our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.”*

IF the inspired author of these words was distinguished by the zeal with which he proclaimed among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ, if he proved himself to be a chosen vessel, by turning many from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, he was no less

remarkable for the anxiety which he manifested for the spiritual advancement and improvement of those already converted to the faith. It was not enough for him to see men shielded from the wrath to come. It was not enough for him to know that their iniquities were forgiven, and that they were accepted in the Beloved. He sought to urge them onwards; to stimulate them to aim at the highest point of Christian attainment on earth, that the Divine glory might be promoted by them, and their own best happiness advanced.

The text affords us a striking instance of this. The apostle was addressing the Thessalonians—that Church which was his glory and joy; he was communicating to them words of wisdom and of love; he was warning every man, and teaching every man; and whilst thus engaged, he reveals to them the great object of his desire on their behalf; and it was, “That their hearts might be established unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” How high, how holy was this object! How worthy of an apostle of the Lamb! For this he laboured, for this he prayed. Nor does he conceal from them the means for the attainment of this end. There was one grace which, above all others, he saw to be important, and which he prayed that they might yet more abundantly

enjoy. It was the grace of love: "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do toward you." To the contemplation of this spirit of love, in connexion with the advent of our Lord, our attention is this evening to be directed: and in entering upon the consideration of it, let me premise,

I. *That the highest exercise of this grace is love towards God.*

This is not expressed in the text, but, undoubtedly, it is implied in it. Nay, there is reason to believe that the spirit of love towards God was largely shed abroad in the disciples at Thessalonica. The terms employed to describe their spiritual state seem to convey to us this idea; they had received the Word "in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:"* and such was the grace bestowed upon them, that they had become "ensamples to all that believe."† Can we doubt that this first-fruit of the Spirit was abundantly present with them, that their hearts were directed to "the love of God?"

How important is the place assigned to this amongst the graces of the Christian character! It is *the best evidence of the conversion of the heart.*

What is conversion? Is it not reconciliation with God? Our natural state is that of enmity

* 1 Thess. i. 6.

† 1 Thess. i. 7.

with God. Sin has estranged the affections from him in whom they ought to centre. The glorious Gospel intimates that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."* It tells us of the mighty sacrifice through which a fountain has been opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness, and it invites us to be reconciled to God. This reconciliation is conversion, and the most obvious sign that we can know of the reality of this is, when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. It is in this sense we may venture to declare that, "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God;" and, "he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."† This is in its nature closely allied to that spirit of adoption which is granted to the children of God, of which it is written, that, "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."‡

It is this spirit of love, of love exercised towards God, that we who minister the Word amongst you so greatly desire to see. Oh! tell us not of your clear intellectual views of Divine truth; tell us not of your ability to defend even the most important points connected with our holy faith, but give us in addition to these, the assurance that

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

† 1 John iv. 7, 8.

‡ Gal. iv. 6.

your hearts are delighting in God, and that your souls have found a resting-place in him.

But this love to God is, moreover, indispensable to the promotion of his glory. That we may yield him glory will be admitted to be the great end for which we are continued in the world, but the heart destitute of love cannot yield him glory. Take away this grace, and the most sacred link between the creature and the Creator is gone. But wherever this divine principle is imparted, there we hail the preparation for life being consecrated to the glory of its Author; nay, we are prepared to go beyond this, and to declare that the events of Providence are ordered in such a manner as to afford to those who love God the opportunity to show forth his praise. Can you, brethren, realize this? Can you always feel that the God of providence and the God of grace is one? It may be, that present appearances seem opposed to this. The many and varied trials under which you labour may be hard to reconcile with a Father's love, but that love is no less real. Are any of you now in the furnace of affliction? of affliction, perhaps, of the most aggravated nature? Oh! keep yourselves in the love of God: the chastening is not for the present joyous, but grievous; but it will yield at last the happy and peaceable fruits of

righteousness. Are any of you surrounded by complicated trial? that species of trial, of which we may well say, that the heart knoweth its own bitterness? The cloud is dark, but not so dark, but that the bow of mercy shall yet be displayed upon it. Are any now mourning the loss of earthly friends? Have the most beloved members of your little circles been called away? Oh! still, even under these solemn and affecting circumstances, let every feeling of a rebellious nature be for ever checked by the assurance conveyed by that brief, but blessed intimation, "God is love."

But, further, love to God may be considered as the immediate preparation for the enjoyment of his kingdom. The descriptions given us of the future state of the kingdom prepared for his people, not only convey the impression of perfect purity, but of perfect love. There all is love. The object in which all hearts repose is a God of love. The angels who minister before him, the elders who surround the throne, the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, have all been perfected in love. Love regulates the actions, love suggests the songs of praise which day and night are to be heard in that high and holy place; and if we are to be made meet to enter there, to respond to the Hallelujahs of those blessed beings, we too must be renewed in love. And is it not so? Is

not the love of God largely shed abroad upon those whom he is preparing for his presence? We have, doubtless, noticed this in our own experience. Some Christian friend has appeared to us rapidly to put on the image of the heavenly; we have wondered at his progress, as we have watched his victory over self, his close and holy intercourse with God, when suddenly he has been called to his heavenly home. The sickle has been put in because the harvest was ripe. Or, perhaps, we have seen the aged, when the memory was almost gone, the mental powers impaired, the earthly house of this tabernacle ready to be dissolved, we have seen them still abound in acts of praise, still give utterance to the deep emotions of spirits having fellowship with God. This was love—the love which the Spirit imparts. Love, not of earth, but of heaven. Love, intimating that the great purpose of redemption is accomplished, that the soul is raised from its fallen state to a holy fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and that it is receiving upon earth the impress which it is destined to bear through eternity in heaven.

II. *The exercise of this grace to which the text more particularly refers is love towards the people of God.*

The prayer of the apostle is, “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards

another." This seems to be a necessary consequence of love towards God. St. John refers to it as such, when he says, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him;" nay, more than this, he considers the absence of love to the brethren to be a certain test of the want of love to God, for he asks, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Amidst the powerful arguments which might be adduced to impress upon the Christian Church the paramount importance of this grace, there is one circumstance which ought to endear it to all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It is the fact, that it is made the subject of the Saviour's new commandment. There are times when the human heart is peculiarly open to impressions of a sacred character. It was at such a time that the Redeemer chose to convey this precept to his followers. It was on the night in which he was betrayed, when the prospect of his departure from them had filled their hearts with sorrow; it was then, amidst all the solemnity of that scene, that he said unto them, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."* Nor did his first followers forget this parting precept of

* John xiii. 34.

their Lord. The Christian Church was for a season knit together in love, individual interests were almost forgotten, and the Spirit of Glory and of God rested upon them. In what glowing terms do the apostles refer to this grace, "as touching brotherly love" (says St. Paul) "ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another:"* whilst St. Peter says, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently;"† and the beloved disciple unites it with the all-important gift of faith, saying, "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."‡

How instructive is the view which this imparts to us of the Saviour's spiritual kingdom which is established in the hearts of his people, and which is preparatory to his kingdom of glory. It reveals the link between the subjects of the King of Zion to be a link of love, and it excludes from all participation in this kingdom those whose hearts are filled with opposite emotions. Now, observe the expansive nature of this love. It is not to be limited by any external circumstances. It is not to be measured by strict unity of sentiment. It is not to be confined to those worshipping in the same section of the Church visible with ourselves.

* 1 Thess. iv. 9. † 1 Peter i. 22. ‡ 1 John iii. 23.

These points, each interesting and important in its place, must give way before the mighty impulse of Divine love, they must crumble into insignificance before the Saviour's new commandment. The love which he requires of his people is to be extended to all who from age to age believe in him; to all who hear the Good Shepherd's voice, and follow him; to all the members of that family, now being gathered from all kindreds, and nations, and people, and tongues, and which in heaven and in earth is *one*.

Now, this love to the brethren is to be exercised at a constant sacrifice on our part; for love is of God, it is a fruit of the Spirit, and it is, therefore, constantly resisted by feelings of an opposite nature in our poor fallen hearts;—how blessed is it to bear the cross in this particular, to subdue the emotions of the flesh, to set the Lord alone before us, and to refuse any lower standard of our love than that which the Saviour himself has given, “That ye love one another, *even as I have loved you.*” The human heart will present to us a thousand plausible reasons for an opposite course; our spiritual adversary, ever ready to take advantage of us, will add to these; but the love which the Spirit gives will raise us above them all; it will teach us to bear all things, to hope all things, and to believe all things.

Now, this love to the brethren did already exist in the Church at Thessalonica, but the apostle desired its increase, he prayed that it might abound yet more and more; and we do venture to express our belief that this love exists amongst ourselves; yes, that it exists amongst the Saviour's flock notwithstanding all the divisions and the controversies which prevail. How lamentable the scene which the Church visible presents! How dark and threatening the clouds which gather round us! Yet amidst all these the people of God are not left without direction and guidance from on high; there is a still small voice to be heard by the believer, and which whispers to the willing ear, in accents not to be mistaken, that the way of deliverance from all danger, and of guidance amidst all temptation, is none other than the "more excellent *way* of love."

III. *The text implies that this love is to be extended towards all men.* "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and *toward all men.*"

Here a difficulty has sometimes been expressed. It has been asked whether it is possible to extend in the world the love which is cherished towards the people of God. This difficulty arises from not distinguishing the love of sympathy from the love of benevolence and of compassion. The love of

the Saviour to his people which was of the nature of the former, did not prevent him from extending acts of mercy towards all men, he healed the sick, he cleansed the leper, he gave sight to the blind. The love which he shewed to the humble but holy members of the family of Lazarus, did not prevent him from shedding tears of sorrow and compassion over the deluded inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Now, the manifestation of this love towards all men appears to be one great purpose of God in his spiritual and elect Church preserved in the world. It is, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, that we are exhorted to "put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering."* Why this display of graces so pure and holy? That the world may behold in us some testimony for God, some light from him who is "gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and slow to anger, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."

But, perhaps, the most striking instruction on this subject is that recorded in the 5th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. There, the Saviour addresses his people, (for "he called *his disciples* unto him and taught them,") and he says to them, "Ye are the salt of the earth;"† "Ye are the light of the world,"‡ &c., and having thus

* Col. iii. 12.

† Matt. v. 13.

‡ Matt. v. 14.

reminded them of their high and holy standing, he adds, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you:"* and for what end? "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." O Brethren, does not this reveal his purpose in his saints? Is it not that they may in all ages glorify him by manifesting to others the love wherewith he has loved them.

Now, it is truly wonderful to observe how this love to all men has distinguished the brightest periods in the Church's history. At the commencement of the ministry of our Lord, when, at the testimony of John the Baptist, Andrew was permitted to behold the Lamb of God, he quickly "findeth his own brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus."† When Philip heard the gracious invitation of the Saviour, "Follow me,"‡ he could not conceal the tidings which he had received, but he finds Nathanael, and guides him to the Redeemer. When the woman of Samaria understood that it was indeed the long-promised Messiah who condescended to converse with her,

* Matt. v. 44.

† John i. 40.

‡ John i. 43.

she left her water-pot at the well, and ran to reveal the tidings to her fellow-citizens;* when the Church at Jerusalem was built up in the faith, “they that were scattered abroad preached everywhere the word;”† when the Christians at Antioch were edified and strengthened, Saul and Barnabas were sent forth for the work whereto the Spirit had appointed them.‡ Nor has the effect of the Spirit’s presence been otherwise in modern times. We find a striking instance of this in the Church of the United Brethren. No sooner had that little band of faithful men obtained a resting-place after the long period of persecution and trial through which they had passed than they directed their attention to the wants of the perishing heathen, and in a few short years they had despatched their humble, but faithful missionaries to almost every quarter of the heathen world.

Nor can we fail to acknowledge the existence of this same spirit of love towards all men to be one of the happiest signs of the reality of that revival which, during the last half century, has visited this land. A revival of pure and undefiled religion we maintain it to have been. It originated in those holy and devoted men who arose to testify the great truth of justification by faith in Christ alone, who aroused many from the deathlike

* John iv. 28, 29.

† Acts viii. 4.

‡ Acts xiii. 2.

slumber in which they lay, and who were instrumental in calling forth a goodly band of labourers in the Redeemer's service. We appeal to this fact as a triumphant evidence that God was with them, that the same period has been distinguished by the great increase of philanthropic institutions at home, and by the noble and disinterested labours of our Bible and Missionary Societies abroad. And when we contemplate these works of faith, and consider the many and subtle attempts that have been made to injure them, we cannot but offer to the throne of grace the most fervent prayer that the God of heaven may protect them, and that they may be made further instrumental in enabling his people "to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men."

Our lot is cast in times admitted by all to be remarkable; and if the apostles ministered under the abiding realization, that the "Lord is at hand,"* surely we cannot be wrong in following in their steps. Do you address to us the anxious inquiry once heard from Seir, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?"†—from the watch-tower of Zion we reply, "The morning cometh," the morning of the Saviour's advent, the morning without a cloud to the people

* Phil. iv. 5.

† Isa. xxi. 11.

of God. Awake, dear brethren, to the contemplation of this glorious event, for it is the consummation of the Divine purpose in the covenant of redemption, and it is in the light of this that we now seek to build you up in the faith, that your hearts may be found "stablished unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."

In reference to this, how all important the graces of the Spirit to be manifested in your daily experience. Brethren, do you believe in the Son of God? Throughout this assembly there is, perhaps, a deep response, "Lord, we believe," and if so, oh, abide in the simplicity of your confidence, for this is "*faith*." Do you look forward to the advent of your Redeemer with joy unspeakable and full of glory? This is the privilege of his servants. Oh, do not fail to exercise it, for he hath not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation. This is "*hope*." And, has the Spirit bestowed upon you those precious gifts of faith and hope? They are, indeed, bright and holy evidences of your calling and election, but there is still a kindred grace. It is "*love*." "Now abideth these three, faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love," and if you seek to be found unblameable in

holiness, and to be counted meet to stand before the Saviour at his coming "follow after love," and may "the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men;" for

"Faith shall to full fruition rise,
Hope shall be sight above,
These are the means, but this the end,
For saints for ever love."

LECTURE IV.

THE ESTABLISHED HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH AT THE LORD'S ADVENT.

BY THE REV. C. J. GOODHART, A.M.,
MINISTER OF ST. MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, READING.

1 THESSALONIANS III. 13.

“ To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”

THE subject before us to-night is perhaps as difficult to handle as any that is connected with the solemn event of our Lord's Advent. If my view of it is correct, the scriptural testimony concerning it has been very much overlooked, and it has in consequence not received that attention, or had the benefit of that discussion, at least within my own knowledge, which have so materially helped

to open other abstruse portions of the Word of God. Let me, then, ask for your prayers, that the Lord may graciously vouchsafe His teaching ; and for your indulgence, if I come short of your expectation and satisfaction in the explaining of difficulties, as I know I shall do of my desires.

I. Let me make a few preliminary observations.

1. The coming of the Lord, as introduced in the text, occupies a most important and interesting place. We see in it that event towards which all converges from *one* eternity that it may diverge for *another* ; or, to restrict our view a little, that event to which all the events and circumstances of our life here converge, that they may diverge again for the life to come. At this point results will be ascertained, and from this point be developed.

2. It is *then*, as the text evidently teaches us, that we shall come into a more distinct consciousness of the presence of God (" before God, even our Father,") and that for the special purpose of close and rigid scrutiny. Nor will this be in the spirit only, but we shall be clothed with the body, and be standing in the body, in that locality where the transcendent glory of God will be visibly manifest in its searching and revealing power. The object of this scrutiny will not, however, be, as it would seem, the judgment of the children of God as to condemnation or acquittal ; for the

resurrection will already have evidenced and sealed the latter ; but to ascertain and arrange the bearing on the life to come of what has passed in the life that now is, and to decide what are to be the results in *eternity* of character and conduct in *time*.

3. The *text*, however, I conceive, refers not so much to the *rewards* which shall then be bestowed, and which we should be anxious to gain, as to our individual *feelings* at that time in reference to our position. It seems to me the apostle would urge upon us the providing *now* for a good conscience *then*. Holiness is necessary that we may see God, and that we may be meet for His presence ; but it is no less necessary also for the *personal peace* of the creature. And when everything artificial in man's condition shall be done away with, of which there is so much in us now, and all shall be *truth* both in misery and enjoyment,—that is, we shall *feel* just as miserable as we really are, or *feel* just as happy as we really are,—then will our happiness consist, not only in our being holy, but in our possessing also a joyful consciousness of that holiness. And to this fulness of inward personal assurance in that day, as derived through a right and holy ordering of the life that now is, I understand our text, and other similar passages, to refer.

II. But let me now proceed to bring out the subject in order from the passage before us.

1. I remark on the words, “establish *your hearts* unblameable in holiness,” that they do not mean merely that the people of God will be sanctified ; though this will be so : nor do they mean merely that they will be secured in a holiness from which they can never by any means be displaced, though that will also be the case : but I understand them to imply, on the part of God’s children, *a consciousness to themselves* of their being holy and unblameable ; or, in other words, they point not merely to the condition of their holiness, but to their consciousness of that condition.

The expression, “your *hearts*,” as illustrated by the following passages, proves this :—

2 Thess. ii. 16, 17, “Now our Lord.....comfort your hearts.” The heart is that which is specially capable of consolation.

So, Heb. x. 22, “Let us draw near with a *true heart in full assurance* of faith, having *our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*.”..... You observe here how the blessedness of the condition recommended is connected with the comfort of our being conscious of our possessing it.

So again, Romans v. 5, “Hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad

in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

And again, 1 John iii. 19—21, "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."

Now in all these, and similar passages, it is impossible not to perceive, that our consciousness to ourselves of peace and holiness and happiness is the purpose of God, and a very special object in the arrangements of His mercy. It may be asked, indeed, "Who would deny this? Nay, who does not see that it must be so?" I answer, True: and yet it is a point, I fear, much overlooked practically, and on which it may be worth while to bestow a word in passing. It is just here that the formalist objects to the religion of the Gospel. While it is a system for the intellect merely, and demanding no more than the performance, it matters not how rigid, of an outward ceremonial, he is content to tolerate it, or even forward in enforcing it; but the instant it is proclaimed as a medicine for the *heart*, pouring its light and love into the *affections*, and at once sanctifying and engaging all the *feelings* of the

soul, ignorant of all such effects in himself, he denounces them as wild and fanatical in others; and thus clothes with a forbidding sternness and chilling coldness that manifestation of God to man, which, full of grace and love and peace from His own heart, was intended to carry all those blessings right home to ours. It is this denuding the Gospel of more than half its preciousness, by denying its adaptation to the *feelings* and *affections*, as well as the necessities of man, that needs, especially at this day, to be testified against; and there can be no question as to the mind of Scripture on the matter, when the passages we have quoted, and many others, tell us so plainly it was intended for the *peace* and *comfort*, as well as for the sanctifying, of man: for his *heart*, as well as for his circumstances. Nor does this point deserve to be less noticed in connexion with the *faithful* people of God. It is to be feared that their condition suffers very much from its being overlooked. A true and lively faith in the Son of God, and dependence on Him alone for justification and peace, will not place the Christian where he ought to be, for strength and sanctification, unless the *heart* be in the enjoyment of peace with God. Hence, it is not enough that we are made sons; but it is emphatically added, "Because ye are sons, God hath

sent forth the Spirit of His Son *into your hearts*, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father." He would have in us the consciousness of our sonship, and, therefore, our enjoyment of it; and I fear thousands, to whom, as trusting in Jesus, this privilege belongs the instant they do so, through the simple believing of the love which God hath towards them, are walking in weakness and sorrow, having little or no light, without confidence, and without enjoyment, just because they know not these things.

But,—to return more immediately to our text—the enjoyment of this peace in the heart can spring only from the blood of sprinkling applied by the Holy Ghost; but it will also cease to be maintained except in the holding fast of our integrity; and it is in connexion with this latter point that I believe the expression in our text is to be interpreted, of "our hearts being established unblameable in holiness" at the coming of Jesus. In other words, the prayer of the apostle is, that they may feel conscious in that day, not that they are justified, for this is a totally distinct point; nor yet that they have been free from infirmity and the effects of indwelling sin, for these are inseparable from our condition (Rom. vii. throughout), and, therefore, this would be impossible; but that their walk has been holy, that

they have maintained a good conscience, and that, therefore, they feel their hearts assured and established before God in holiness, as servants that need not be ashamed.

Let me call your attention to some passages which will, I hope, clearly set forth what I mean.

In the Psalms, we find David often appealing before God to his integrity, while he confessed, at the same time, his unworthiness in the Lord's sight. See the whole of Psalm xxvi., of which it may suffice to quote verse 1, "I have walked in mine integrity," and verse 11, "But as for me, I have walked in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me."

Similarly, we find Job "holding fast his integrity;" and, exactly parallel to these expressions, we find Paul saying, Acts xxiii. 1, "I have lived in all *good conscience* before God until this day." And again, Acts xxiv. 16, "Herein do I exercise myself to have always *a conscience void of offence* toward God and toward men."

This latter text appears more particularly applicable to the subject we have in hand, because it is connected in the context with the resurrection of the dead, to which it would seem directly to refer. But, if this be questioned, there are other passages we may readily adduce. Among these is the passage already quoted, 1 John iii. 19, 20.

Still more to the point is 1 John iv. 17, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have *boldness in the day of judgment*;" which at once illustrates the words of the text, "stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness," especially in connexion with the verse which precedes it, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love."

The same idea, and in the same connexion, is set before us in such passages as these:—1 John ii. 28, "And now, little children, abide in Him: that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." 2 Peter iii. 14, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Phil. i. 10, and Heb. vi. 11, might be quoted as bearing on the same point; as also 1 Cor. iii. 12, &c., which, however it be understood, distinctly teaches the consciousness of loss under certain circumstances in "that day." "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." But perhaps, after all, what I understand the text to mean may be best illustrated by the servants in the parables of the pounds and of the talents, Luke xix. 12, &c.; Matt. xxv. 14, &c. The

very manner in which the two faithful servants in each parable address themselves to their Lord, is the expression of the consciousness of integrity, and at once the result and evidence of a heart established unblameable in holiness:—"Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds:" "Lord, thou deliveredst to me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." This is not the language of self-sufficient merit, nor is it to be understood as implying any sense of profitableness;—for all are unprofitable servants, even when they have done all;—but it is the language of conscious integrity and honest faithfulness, or of what Paul calls a good conscience,—the expression of one who has loved and followed the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. And the answer only confirms this view:—"Well done, thou *good* and *faithful* servant; thou hast been *faithful* (a word which would repay examination in connexion with this subject) over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The statement of the wicked servant, on the other hand, may well be contrasted with those of the others in the timidity, shame, and consciousness of guilt, vainly attempting an excuse, which it so clearly manifests.

Another passage, Matt. xxv. 34, &c., may be here referred to, if not in direct illustration of the

point before us, at least to remark, that it is not opposed to this view. Those at the right hand, when commended by the Lord for all they had done to Him, do not answer under a sense of shame, as if they felt their conduct had been the opposite of that which is declared concerning them, but simply as not being aware that they had ever had the opportunity of doing these things to Christ personally. When, therefore, He explains Himself, we find no disclaimer.

III. The above may suffice to illustrate what I understand to be the apostle's meaning in the text. On what has so far been said, the following remarks seem naturally to suggest themselves :—

(1.) This blessed condition (of the heart being established unblameable in holiness before God) at the day of Christ, does not seem a matter of course, and, therefore, what all Christians alike, who are saved at all, will necessarily attain to.

This would appear from the passages already quoted, which I need not repeat, to which may be added Col. i. 21—23, “ You.....hath He reconciled... ..to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.”

And herein it differs from the resurrection of which all the children of God will equally par-

take. True : there is a passage with regard to the resurrection, Phil. iii. 11, which might be instanced in reply to this remark ; but Paul uses a very peculiar word in this case (*ἐξανάστασιν*), and seems to be speaking, not of the resurrection generally, but rather of a condition the very equivalent to that which we are now discussing.

(2.) This condition is clearly stated to be the result of what *now* takes place, and to be closely connected, therefore, with the use of present means, the course of present conversation, and the supply of grace in the present life. In the text, for instance, it is the end of our being made to abound in love : in 2 Pet. iii. 14, it is the consequence of our being diligent.

(3.) If watchfulness and diligence with a view to this are not maintained, the whole tenour of the above passages goes to prove that *shame* and *loss* will ensue. The only question that would seem to arise on this point is, whether the alternative of unblameableness and confidence be not absolute exclusion from the glory.

But two considerations militate against this. First, that if those who have reason to be ashamed are excluded, they are not partakers of the first resurrection, and do not, therefore, stand before the Father at the coming of Jesus at all. Secondly, the complexion and natural interpreta-

tion of all the passages quoted above imply the feeling of shame, and diminution of reward, in some cases at least; while the wicked servant in the parable must represent those living at the time of the coming, who will be cast into *outer darkness*: the rest of this class consisting of those who, having died before the advent in a similar condition, are not raised at this time.

It may not be out of the way to quote here the portion of a passage, 2 Pet. i. 1—11, the whole of which deserves very serious meditation. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be *ministered unto you abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Can we reasonably understand the alternative of an *abundant* entrance to be no entrance at all? And does not the whole passage point to a relative order of dignity amongst many, all of whom will be equally saved, consequent on the greater or less diligence and holiness which their conversation in this life has manifested? The passage, 2 John, 8, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a *full* reward," leads directly to the same conclusions.

IV. But it is time that we advert here to a

question which will naturally arise in many minds. Can any such feeling as that of *shame* be consistent with the full glory we expect, and the full happiness promised to us in that day? To this we might at once answer: certainly, if we are to be guided simply by what we find stated in the Word of God. The *possibility* of shame is most clearly implied; whether it shall be *realized* in any case is another matter: the certainty of complete happiness—not of equal glory—is just as clearly declared, and, therefore, must also be.

But not to leave the answer in this naked form, our object being to satisfy, as far as possible, our own mind and yours on this important subject, let me venture a remark or two by way of explanation:—

(1.) *There will be no consciousness of unforgiven sin.* This must be carefully borne in mind, whatever difficulty there may be in apprehending it in connexion with the subject before us.

(2.) The proportion of reward in the world to come to the devotedness of the Christian here implies, in many instances at any rate, not to say in all, that if one should have less glory than another, it will be as having come short in laying out his talent for the Lord, and as suffering loss in consequence. It is clear that the children of God may use more or less effort in one and the same

duty at different times. It is equally clear that there may be more or less of slovenliness or selfishness in the spiritual walk of different persons, and of the same persons at different seasons. And if a difference of reward result from all this, it is quite impossible that a difference of feeling should not result also. The very justifying of the Lord in His judgment to the individual, as well as to the world, requires this. The apportionment of any reward according to works (which, be it understood, once for all, is entirely distinct from, and subsequent to, our justification, fully and freely by grace alone through faith for the alone merits of Jesus) must imply, in the very nature of the case, that greater devotedness will receive greater reward, and less, less ; and the whole arrangement must be perfectly unmeaning, if he to whom the reward is apportioned is aware of no such rule, and, therefore, conscious of no grounds of such assignment.

(3.) There will be the most perfect acquiescence in that day, in the righteous judgment of God, on the part of all involved in it ; and when I say perfect, I mean cheerful and willing. However any may feel (and we fear some will feel) that, but for slothfulness and self-indulgence in various ways, they would have obtained a much brighter crown, yet each will justify and approve his own

lower position, while he will unfeignedly rejoice in the higher one attained by some of his brethren. No sense of personal loss in that day can involve for one moment the feeling of envy towards others, or a grudge against their superior glory ; if there can be shame at such a moment, it will at least be without sin ; and if humiliation, it will consist with a sense of complete and eternal forgiveness. Perhaps the passage, Ezekiel xvi. 60—63, may help to elucidate this confessedly difficult point. “ Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish* unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed. . . . And I will establish my covenant with thee ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord : That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.” Perhaps, indeed, this passage is a more accurate illustration of the not uncommon experience of the believer in this life, where the constant feeling of being ashamed for past negligences and shortcomings is quite compatible with perfect peace, and unreserved fellowship with God ; but still this very latter condition seems to throw some light on the point we are handling, and to bear us

out by analogy in the conclusions we feel warranted by Scripture in drawing.

(4.) The practical bearing of the whole question must not be left out of sight, as corroborating the view we have taken. The first thing to be settled in each individual case of incomparable and overwhelming importance is unquestionably whether we are or are not *savingly* and *vitally* in Christ. Beyond this, the question of *less or greater reward*, as resulting from less or more of present devotedness, is continually urged upon us in Scripture. But in the subject before us, we find another question *still*, of the deepest personal interest, namely, as to what will be our *individual feeling* and conviction with regard to the portion of glory awarded us in that day. There will be the solemn and righteous judgment of God, but there must also be the judgment of ourselves ; and for our hearts to be established in that day unblameable in holiness, we must be able to feel that we have walked here carefully, diligently, and honestly, not in idleness, not slovenly, but abounding through grace in love, and in the work of the Lord.

But here it is necessary that I make a remark of no little moment. It may seem, from some things I have said under this last head, that I have wished to comfort the Christian in the prospect of any measure of shame being his portion at the day of

Christ, and that I have thus been leading him to care less about incurring it. I hope I need only refer to the possibility of this impression to ensure its instant and resolute rejection. It was necessary to show that such a condition at the coming of Jesus was not inconsistent with other plain statements of the Word of God concerning the happiness and glory of the believer; but God forbid that any should on this account be indifferent to the object, so earnestly urged in the text and other passages, of our hearts being established unblameable, and ourselves having boldness and confidence in that day. This would render questionable our preparation at all for the kingdom of God. And he that would not mind incurring the shame provided he went not entirely without the happiness, would be, must I not say, certain to find himself excluded altogether from the glory of the first resurrection.

V. We pass on to the important inquiry, how this establishment of heart may be attained? and the answer supplied by the passages we have quoted, including the text, is a simple one—namely, by so walking, through the grace of God, that there may be no cause for *blame*—nothing to *unsettle* the soul in the consciousness of what is past; and, on the other hand, a conviction of our having earnestly and in sincerity followed after

that *holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord. The fulfilling of all this is comprised in our abounding and being made perfect in love; which, though it involves the constant duty on our part of diligent and unwearied watchfulness, comes only, as the prayer of the apostle teaches us, from the precious grace of Him who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Let us endeavour to get a view somewhat in detail of this deeply practical part of our subject by considering,

First, what needs to be guarded against. We may notice,

(1.) *All insincerity and deceit.* These include all heartless worship; all the mere mechanical performance of spiritual duties and exercises; the approaching to God, whether in the closet, family, or sanctuary, without a sense of His presence, or interest in His service. Nor should we omit here all endeavours to promote His kingdom or to aid His people, without a heartfelt concern in such efforts; the subscription given to Societies without prayer, and co-operation limited to our name being in the list of supporters. All underhanded dealings after the manner of the world, with which even the children of God sometimes get infected, and into which they become entrapped, deserve also to be mentioned. How often are deceptions

in trade, or in regard to the Government, connived at even by Christians, in whom evil communications have corrupted good manners; and how will they be ashamed of all these things when they feel the blots they have been upon their holy character.

(2.) *Allowed inconsistencies* are closely allied to these things, and often verge upon those presumptuous sins against which the Psalmist so earnestly prays. How careful should we be of venturing on forbidden ground; of taking liberties with the evil that is around us; of *allowing* even minute spots, which will soon grow into large ones, on the robe of our Christian holiness; of admitting slight deviations from the strict path of Christian consistency. How should we “hate even the garment spotted with the flesh.”

(3.) In this connexion we notice, also, *the giving way to evil tempers and the will of the flesh*. How often have these been unsubdued, and thus proved roots of bitterness, troubling a large portion of the household of God in public and in private! How much havoc have they made continually of the strength and peace of the Christian! What materials have they laid up for his being ashamed in that day! How has the Gospel been dishonoured hereby for the apparent impotency of its motives and failure of its grace!

(4.) *Contentedness with small attainments and small doings*, combined often with *love of ease and self-indulgence*, is also to be carefully guarded against. The world knows how to lay shame at the door of that man who, with a stimulus to energetic action, either in his own talent, or in the claims of those who are naturally and rightly dependant upon him, resists the call to noble and generous exertion for his own distinction, or for others' blessing. But what shame shall be too deep for that Christian to feel towards himself, who, with grace for his strength, and glory for his reward, has cared to put forth only little of the one, and therefore to gain as little of the other?

What will he not find he has lost by resisting growth in knowledge and research into Divine truth, beyond their mere elements and the food they furnish to babes?—while a life of ease in the retrospect will make his heart sink within him under the conviction of its fruitlessness, compared with the rich harvest of golden grain gathered by many of far lowlier and obscurer condition, in the teaching of the Sunday-school, the visiting of the fatherless and widow, and the comforting of the sick and the dying, in their hovels of misery.

(5.) Another class of hindrances to be guarded against in seeking this establishment of heart, is connected with the *world*: and *an over-estimate*

of this, coupled with *undue dedication of time and talents to its objects*, may stand first among them.

In that day when the glory of a heavenly crown will be rightly and fully appreciated, what will be thought of all the undue homage of opinion and conduct that has been paid too often by the Christian to its wealth and rank, its judgment and its fashion? Yea, "they shall be ashamed of the oaks which they have desired, and of the gardens which they have chosen." How will he feel sensible of the vanity of those idols which the heart has often wilfully cherished, and of the worthlessness of those trifling objects to which time and talents have been devoted? Mere earthly ends of interest and action, apparently, perhaps, great and noble, will in that day betray their own emptiness and folly, compared with everything, however little, that has had in it a seed of immortality. He will feel ashamed then to have bowed at the shrine of genius, or science, or intellectual greatness, and to have despised or overlooked the holiness and grace, the patience and perseverance of a poor saint struggling with sin, and fighting a good fight with unearthly adversaries. And still more,—when these despised ones will, in their path of sorrow and of trial, have gained a brighter crown and higher glory, than he in his chair of easy security and his walk of worldly respectability.

There seems to be a growing adulation of worldly greatness, and an increasing tendency to an undue estimation of wealth and pride and pomp, which, if care be not taken, will sadly dim the crown of many a Christian, when everything shall pass for its worth. And, in that day, to have laid up dust for jewels, and dirt for gold and precious stones; to have reckoned that wealth consisted in money rather than in "good works," and in earthly accumulations rather than in the benedictions of the poor and fatherless and widow; will surely occasion no little shame when the loss shall be truly estimated. And yet we fear that many, if not all of us, are falling not a little into this snare. May we not gather a little counsel from the exhortation of the apostle: "Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons?" and from the warning of the same apostle, "ye have heaped treasure together for the last days?" Nor less from St. Paul, who teaching a right use of the world in the prospect of the coming glory (1 Timothy vi. to the end), presses upon those of us who have little, godly contentment; and on those who have much, godly liberality. Nor should it be omitted here, that the Christian often incurs much loss by pushing unduly lawful occupations. The spiritual life is often paralysed because a man, a *Christian* man, in his lawful calling, will strive for thousands

where hundreds would more than suffice, and for hundreds where tens would give a competency.

And what is this in his case but deliberately to prefer time to eternity, and to place this world in competition with the world to come? True, an excuse is ready; man is not to be slothful in business; a Christian is to provide for them of his own house; but if such could read the shame they are gathering against that day, would they not at least take care that their labour for the meat that endureth should, on no account, be curtailed by their exertions for that which perisheth?

(6.) *Worldly association and worldly conformity* may well be next noticed; but briefly, for they are common topics.

The world will always have its various ranks of society, and the Christian, while in the world, may move in them; but he should ever carry with him his own proper character and habits, and ever let his light shine. Nor should his sphere in the world be the limit of his association with others. His Christian communication and kindness should extend as far as may be to the household of faith, and to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. How much of the strength and influence of a believer's walk is often lost by his contact with the world! How much of his time is often wasted in its frivolous conversation! While the

former might have been maintained, and the latter redeemed by intercourse, perhaps in more humble life, with the heirs of glory, and in communion with those whose poverty and ignorance are irradiated with light from heaven through the blessed habit of intercourse with God. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, . . . and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." Surely, then, they will lose much whose life has been in far too great a measure in the world, and with it.

(7.) Connected with these hindrances to the Christian, and consequent sources of shame, which he should avoid by all means, must be reckoned the *forsaking of truth* through temptation, and the *shrinking from persecution* through fear. St. Paul alludes to the *former* when he says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." How careful should minister and people be of there being any spot or stain in that day! And with regard to the *latter*, it may suffice to quote our Lord's solemn words, "He that is ashamed of Me and of My words, . . . of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in the glory of His Father. . . ." Oh! how should we watch against that fear of man which bringeth a snare! How *secretly* is it often working;

but how *effectually* does it influence and overbear us! How often, owing to this, has our conduct been insincere, even to Him whom our soul loved; and what can shame us like this?

(8.) I remark once more, that a *contentious spirit* and all *uncharitableness towards others* should be carefully guarded against as sure to occasion shame.

James says, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the judge standeth before the door." So Paul: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption;" immediately adding, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice." Nor is it merely such direct uncharitableness we are to guard against; but the *unkindness*, and *want of consideration* which, ever arising from our natural selfishness, may often occasion to others discomfort and oppression. All arbitrary and harsh conduct, all impatient and precipitate judgment, a revengeful or unforgiving spirit, a readiness to take offence and to put the worst constructions upon conduct,—these and all similar tendencies need to be the more watched against just because, not appearing as gross and palpable sins, they insidiously make the greater inroads upon Christian holiness and consistency.

We may well call to mind here our Lord's parable of the two debtors, and the severe, but just judgment on him who took his fellow-servant by the throat after he had himself been forgiven.

It may be well, before we go farther, to remind you here of an important distinction to which we have already alluded. Shortcoming and infirmity are inseparable from our condition here ; but something more than these are implied in the occasions of shame we have thus been enumerating. It is when we have known and felt what was right, and have omitted or resisted it ; or what was wrong, and have allowed or practised it, that we have been laying up cause for shame at the appearing of Christ. It is the ingredient of wilfulness, therefore, that is to be dreaded in all our shortcomings, and the sinning against light which we have to fear in connexion with our infirmities. Now, these are not confined to such as do not savingly know Christ ; they are to be found even in His true children, to a certain extent ; and I have specified already the points in connexion with which they are most likely to occur. A real Christian may give way, for instance, to temper, and indulge, instead of resisting an evil propensity ; or he may be betrayed through infirmity into sudden transgression ; in either case there is *sin* : but that the former is more hateful, as well as

more deeply pernicious in its nature and consequences, no one can question, who has learnt to dread more especially presumptuous sins. To excuse transgression at all, to make light even of an infirmity, is very evil in the sight of a holy God ; but to excuse any wilful trespass under the cloak of an infirmity is likely to be followed by the most fearful consequences.

But let us pass on from the consideration of what is to be avoided, to notice,

Secondly, What means are to be pursued for the attaining this establishment of heart at the coming of the Lord.

And the context at once teaches us it is to be *by abounding in love*. We need not wonder at this when we know that perfect love casteth out fear ; and that love is the fulfilling of the law.

Wherever this precious grace is in full exercise, as shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, *there* there can be no reserve towards God ; no feeling of distance in communion with Him ; no allowed sin ; but an entire surrender of the whole man to His service ; faithful obedience to all His will ; and an earnest desire after and seeking for His glory.

But it will be necessary to mention some special points, included under this general head, with which this establishment of heart will be found

connected, for the sake of giving, as we earnestly desire to do, a thoroughly practical bearing to our subject. And here we may seem in some measure to be repeating in a positive form, what we have already treated negatively; but we are unwilling to pass over such express and important duties of the Christian life without, in a few words at least, directly enforcing them. Let us endeavour, then, to place ourselves for a few moments, solemnly, and with consideration, in the condition in which the text supposes us, "before God even our Father," "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints," with our hearts established unblameable in holiness; so that there is no misgiving, no fear, no shame. What will be instrumental to produce such a state as this? Not the obliteration from our memory of all our earthly condition, and therefore of all our sins and negligences; nor yet *only* the precious assurance, which there will be, that through the blood of the Lamb *every* sin has been blotted out, *every* iniquity forgiven; but the superadded consciousness, that through the grace of God, we have walked in truth and sincerity; or, in the language of the apostle, "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." (2 Cor. i. 12.)

(1.) We shall need, then, in that day a consciousness of *sincerity*.

Do not be afraid of this word: the world trusts it, indeed, as a saviour to their confusion; but the Christian must carefully and earnestly cultivate it. He must remember, that his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that he is prone to turn aside into crooked ways; that he is apt to get entangled in the habits of the world, where deceit is defended, and systematically practised; and that, therefore, in thought, word, and deed, he must seek to be "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," remembering that his daily food is to be "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." In everything, therefore, he should be a *transparent* character. See Psalm xv. at length, where we have the description of him who shall dwell in the hill of the Lord and abide in His tabernacle (at His coming). So Paul, in a passage worth quoting at length, as closely parallel with the text, "And this, I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be *sincere and without offence* till the day of Christ."

(2.) We shall need also, as connected with this, a consciousness of *faithfulness*: faithfulness as stewards of the talent committed to us; faithful-

ness towards *others* in the use of those talents, for their best and everlasting advantage. We shall need to feel in that day, that we have honestly told them the truth, and not allowed their souls to perish without warning; that we have lovingly and tenderly considered their circumstances and difficulties, prejudices, and ignorances; that we have rebuked with all kindness not being afraid, and encouraged with all comfort not being weary; that we have perilled character and life rather than go with the multitude to do evil; and rejoiced to cast in our lot with the Lord's poor and afflicted ones, rather than be honoured of them that fear Him not. In short, that we have remembered the word of our Lord: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

(3.) We shall, moreover, need to feel in that day, that we have been enabled *diligently to devote ourselves and all we have to the Lord's service, at any sacrifice*. This includes the daily preference of the Lord's will and work to our own ease and indulgence; and the giving up of what may be even lawful enjoyment, for the more plenteously sowing precious seed unto life eternal. We may, perhaps, maintain our character as Christians, and our fellowship with God as children, in the midst of many personal comforts, not unconnected with the exercise of Christian charity; but to live to

Him, to find it our meat and drink to do the will of Him that hath called us, to be instant in season, out of season; and, even if laymen or private Christians, to be in labours more abundant; to redeem the time, to save even little portions for God; much, very much, will all this, fulfilled through Him and unto Him, relieve us of shame in that day when He shall give to every one according to his works.

(4.) To make but one more remark under this head, we shall need to feel that we have earnestly and diligently followed after *all* holiness, fulfilled *all* love, and laboured to exercise, in full life and vigour, *every* Christian grace. It will not satisfy us then that we have reached the fashionable standard of devotedness, or, it may be, gone somewhat beyond the line of ordinary profession. We shall feel the value of graces ripened through the careful waiting on ordinances, and of principles established through the patient perseverance of habit. The plenteousness, too, as well as the maturity of our fruit, will add to our joy. To have dealt out our obedience by measure, and our love by rule;—to have applied calculation to our sacrifices, and the scales to our gifts to the Lord, will seem then the policy of the fool who grudges seed in the seed-time. We shall be glad in that day if our one talent has gained ten talents rather than

five, or five rather than two. Such devotedness may have demanded rigid watchfulness, habitual self-denial, careful disposal of time, and ready seizure of opportunities; it may have curtailed lawful enjoyment in many ways; it may have driven the Christian from converse with books in his study, or even drawn him from the lawful fascinations of a family circle; and made him exchange his easy chair for the bedside of the dying, and his drawing-room for the hovel of wretchedness; but he will only rejoice the more in that day, when what he hath sown he shall also reap, and, though not unconscious of manifold infirmity, shall yet stand before his Lord as the faithful servant, who feels that with an honest heart he has laid himself out for His glory.

Such an one,—living daily on the grace of God, and devoted to His service, delighting in communion with God, and ever tracing all to His love in His own dear Son,—filled also with all the fruits of righteousness which are, by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God: such an one will be found of the Saviour in peace at His appearing, and thus have his heart established unblameable in holiness at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

A few brief observations shall close our review of this important subject.

(1.) How distinctly is thus brought out the connexion of the present with the future, and the bearing of the former on the latter.

If the illustration is not too remote, we may liken all the thought and feeling and conduct of our present condition to so many pencils of rays, which, instead of being abruptly terminated at the close of our present existence, are to be refracted through the prism of the coming judgment, then to be contracted or expanded from their apparent to their true dimensions, and thenceforth to assume their true colour of greater or less brilliancy throughout the eternal existence that is to follow. All that is to come, therefore, is sure to take its character from what now is. An easy life and slovenly conversation will not find itself in that day possessed, to its surprise, of the reward of painstaking, self-denying devotedness. While those who, from love of the coming glory, (for such, and not of any mercenary kind, is the principle which animates them,) have laboured with earnestness and diligence in their holy calling, will not find at that solemn judgment that they might as well have saved their labour, and been content with the ordinary range of effort and sacrifice. Nay, "He that soweth plenteously shall reap also plenteously."

And if you are anxious to ascertain at once

what will be the result of present inward experience or outward conduct, present to them (to recur to our former illustration) the prism of *the Word*. This will at once shew their character and tendencies, and anticipate with present certainty what eternity will realize. Human opinion and popular judgment will here only mislead. "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge a man at the last day."

(2.) But is the aim, to which we are thus urged, hopeless or too high? With men it is impossible: but not with God. Mark the text: "*The Lord make you to abound.....to the end He may establish.....*" So; again, 1 Thess. v. 24, "*Faithful is He that hath called you, who also will do it.*" (See v. 23.) And, again, 2 Thess. iii. 3, "*The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil.*" Everything is beyond you by nature: everything is possible to you through grace.

(3.) And to the end that you may not be discouraged, remember who is the great agent in your preparation and in the establishment of your hearts; even the Holy Ghost, that other Advocate, that holy Comforter, who sheddeth abroad the love of God in you, that you may have boldness before Him; and anointeth you, that ye may

abide in Him, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. Oh, then, quench not that Spirit: grieve Him not: let His sealing be manifest, clear and distinct, to yourselves and others. Let there be nothing equivocal, either in your experience or your conversation. So shall you keep a good conscience: and, the Spirit Himself bearing witness with your spirits that ye are the sons of God, ye shall wait in holy confidence for the fulness of your adoption, even the redemption of your body.

(4.) And the result of all will be your establishment, uninterruptedly and for ever, in holiness before God;—a condition no sin or sorrow can invade from within or from without. What a consoling prospect for such a world as this, under conflict and weariness, the consciousness of infirmity and the fear of sin! “Hold that fast then that ye have, that no man take your crown.” “Behold, I come as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments; lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

(5.) Finally, brethren, I feel that I have in some measure been treading on tender ground; and *that*, because I fear that there is a prevailing disposition among Christians, for various reasons, not to entertain the truth I have thus brought before you.

Some think that our urging the necessity of a good conscience, and sincerity of character and conduct, savours of salvation by man's merit, and of other dependence than simply on Christ.

Others are alarmed at the very mention of *reward*, and especially if proportioned to effort, as interfering with the principle of free grace on the Lord's part, and cheerful obedience on ours, and reducing our perfect freedom to a compulsory service.

Others, again, refuse to admit our conclusions, just because they are walking slovenly and taking their ease, and therefore their own personal condemnation would be a consequence of their truth.

Brethren, let nothing that has been said be understood as attributing anything to man, or taking anything from God: God forbid. It is He that hath wrought all our works in us: it is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Still, we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; which comprises the sum and substance of all I have been pressing upon you. And, therefore, on the other hand, let no fulness and freeness of grace be the pretext for folding the hands, or contenting yourselves with a slovenly conversation. If you take liberties, if you defile your conscience, if you venture even a very little

into wilful sins, you will certainly be ashamed. And yet, if we compare practice with profession in the present day, do not such evil things seem extensively spreading? Yea, was there ever a time, when there was more need to remind the Church of Christ what manner of persons they ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, if they would be found of Him in peace with their hearts established in holiness at His coming? Let me, then, with earnestness entreat you carefully to review your position. Look at your opportunities, means, influence, wealth, time, talents, in the light, I will not say, of coming *judgment*, to *alarm* you, but of coming *glory*, to *encourage* you. There is no doubt your intention, whatever it may be, has great capabilities, much greater probably than you have ever been aware of. Ascertain what they are, and at once seek to make the most of them. Watch against a careless and slothful spirit; against easy indifference, against religious indolence.

Beware of moderation and lukewarmness where a holy enthusiasm alone becomes us; and of *leisurely* working; when "the time is *short*." Just think *now*, how your conduct will strike you when it is impossible to retrieve it. Suppose that your worldly means are large, or that you are in what are popularly called easy circumstances, and

that you listen to the solicitations of self-indulgence, and forbear exertion,—that one hour after another is frittered away on (miscalled) innocent amusements, or some pursuit of refined taste ; that the poor and sick are uncared for, the fatherless and widow unvisited, ignorant children untaught, perishing Jews and Heathen unevangelized, the world not inconvenienced by your light, or made uncomfortable by your faithfulness ; you may have passed for a Christian, and have had something of a Christian's experience within you, but will you not be *ashamed* of yourself in that day ? And if, on the other hand, a lawful worldly calling and full employment have been avowedly the reason and secretly the excuse for your neglecting all such duties, and you have given your time and strength to the labour of this life, it may be, for your children's bread, yet is it possible you will not feel, that something should have been done more directly bearing on the glory of God, and time reserved for the more precious and peculiar duties of your Christian profession ? Oh ! whether men of leisure, or men of business, remember the incorruptible treasure is the kingdom of God and His righteousness ; and see that *in seeking these* ye be not to be reproved. Remember, too, the character which becomes you as expectants of this glory, and see that in *that* also ye be not to be

reproved. Yea, seek to gather round you in its Christian perfectness every Christian grace; and, therefore, (to close with a passage I would commend to your deliberate examination and prayerful pondering,) “giving all diligence add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall; for *so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Thus, brethren, will your hearts be established unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. *Amen.*

LECTURE V.

THE ATTENDANCE OF ANGELS IN THE DAY OF CHRIST.

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1 THESS. IV. 16.

*“ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven
with a shout, with the voice of the archangel,
and with the trump of God.”*

THE distinguishing feature of our Lord's first advent was deep humiliation. “ He came to visit us in great humility.” “ Born King of the Jews,”* (for it was a true report which the wise men brought from the East,) yet were no preparations made to receive him as king. So far from it, the angel, who announced his birth to the shepherds, gave this as a sign,—“ Ye shall find

• Matt. ii. 2.

the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger,"*—a sign, not merely of the Saviour's identity, but of the colouring and character of his first advent. His head lying low with the beasts of the stall, was an intimation not only that this was he whom the angel had announced, but that it was he of whose deep humiliation the Prophet spake when he said, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; . . . despised, . . . stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."†

The second advent will be distinguished by great glory: he will "come again in his glorious majesty." Hence this event is designated in the Scriptures, "The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;"‡ "the coming of the Son of man with power and great glory;"§ his "power and coming," and "majesty."||

The humiliation of his first advent was his own voluntary act. "He made himself of no reputation:" "he humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross."¶ The glory of his second advent is the honour and majesty laid upon him by the Father;** "Wherefore (because

* Luke ii. 12. † Isa. liii. 3, 4. ‡ Tit. ii. 13.

§ Matt. xxiv. 30; Mark xiii. 26; Luke xxi. 27.

|| 2 Pet. i. 16. ¶ Phil. ii. 7, 8. ** Ps. xxi. 5.

he so humbled himself,) God also hath highly exalted him." And this his present exaltation, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,"* is a pledge and token that the Son of God, who hath already "set up himself above the heavens," will, when he comes again, "set his glory above all the earth."†

It is for the fuller manifestation of his power and majesty and glory, that the Father hath ordained that all the holy angels shall attend him in the day of his Second Advent.

To this feature of the glory that shall be revealed, viz., "THE ATTENDANCE OF ANGELS IN THE DAY OF CHRIST," your attention is now to be directed.

May the Lord of hosts, the King of Glory, even Jesus, who hath entered the heavenly gates and everlasting doors, now to appear in the presence of God for us,—may He be present by the Holy Ghost to guide, and teach, and bless us!

The subject of this Lecture requires the investigation of three points,—

- I. The agency and character of angels.
- II. Their attendance in the day of Christ.
- III. The purposes for which they will attend.

* Eph. i. 21.

† Ps. lvii. 5.

I. The agency of holy angels has been too much lost sight of by the Christian Church. The abuse of the subject by the Church of Rome has contributed much to this result; so that in our just abhorrence of the worship and invocation of angels, we have been led to overlook the existence and agency of angels.

It cannot, however, escape us, that the testimonies of Scripture bearing upon this subject are most numerous. How often in the Old Testament we find angels employed in services of love for the heirs of salvation. The history of Abraham,* of Jacob,† of Moses,‡ of Gideon,§ of David,|| furnish repeated notices of angelic ministrations. While in the New Testament, not only is the fact of their existence confirmed, but we are expressly told that they are “all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them that shall be the heirs of salvation.”¶ The subject, therefore, is not one of mere curious speculation, but is intended to contribute to the comfort and peace of the people of God.

But if the agency of angels has been overlooked, no less has their character been misconceived. In this poets and painters have been to blame. The descriptions they have given of these

* Gen. xviii. 19. † Gen. xxxii. 1. ‡ Exod. xiv. 19.

§ Judg. vi. 11. || 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. ¶ Heb. i. 14.

“ministers of God, that do his pleasure,” have tended much to raise false conceptions of their character. In too many instances, infantine weakness or feminine delicacy have been the prominent features traced by the pencil or the pen. How different the description presented in the Word of God! Strength, extraordinary strength, is perhaps the most prominent of angelic attributes. Thus, in Psalm ciii. 20, they are addressed as “angels that *excel in strength*.” In 2 Thess. i. 7, they are described as “*mighty* angels.” In Psalm lxxviii. 25, where our translation has “man did eat angels’ food,” it is literally “the bread of the *mighty*.” And again, in Psalm lxxxix. 6, we read, “Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord, who among the *sons of the mighty* can be likened unto the Lord?” To which may be added, the names given to angels in the Epistles of the New Testament, “Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers.”* These convey the idea of extraordinary power and strength.

Another prominent feature in the angelic character is holiness. Our Lord calls them “the *holy* angels.”† When the Prophet Isaiah in vision beheld the seraphim surrounding the throne, they

* Col. i. 16; Ephes. i. 21; 1 Pet. i. 22.

† Matt. xxv. 31.

were adoring the holiness of God, crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy."* Without holiness none can be admitted into the presence of the Lord ; but these do always behold "the face of the Father in heaven."† They are admitted to his presence ; and they admire above all his attributes, the holiness of Jehovah. They are holy ; but not by any inherent goodness of their own. They are "*elect* angels"‡—chosen to be holy, and therefore made and kept holy by the power of God.

To strength and holiness may be added, as a third point of the angelic character, love. Their love to God may be traced in the delight they discover in the works of God. For instance, when the work of creation was finished, "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy."§ And when the greater work of redemption was about to be achieved, a multitude of the heavenly host was heard to sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."|| Loving God supremely, they view all that he does with ineffable delight.

From these three qualities, strength, and holiness, and love, arises a fourth important feature of character ; this is obedience—obedience

* Isaiah vi. 3. † Matt. xviii. 10. ‡ 1 Tim. v. 21.

§ Job xxxviii. 7.

|| Luke ii. 13, 14.

so perfect that our blessed Lord proposes it as the pattern for our imitation, teaching us to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is *in heaven*." We nowhere find an instance of an angel acting independently of the Divine command. Entire submission—implicit obedience—are never-failing characteristics of the heavenly hosts. To serve God, and to do his pleasure, is the end and the happiness of their existence. Indeed the name angel ("one sent") implies that they are God's ministers whom he sends to do his pleasure. O, what a mark of our shame, what a proof of our utter apostasy from God! Holy angels account it an honour, and esteem it their happiness to do the will of the Most High; but sinful men feel it an irksome and a heavy service. Angels in heaven fly on the wings of obedience upon the least intimation of the Divine pleasure; but men upon earth must have "line upon line, and precept upon precept:" and even then, how loath to make the will of God their rule of life.

The foregoing observations are intended to establish the fact of angelic agency; and to show that strength, holiness, love, and obedience are among the prominent features of the angelic character.

II. We now proceed, secondly, to show that angels will attend in the day of Christ.

From the sixty-eighth Psalm it appears that when our Saviour ascended up to heaven, he was attended by angels. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; and the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive." And it was by these attendant angels escorting their Lord to the mansions of his Father's house that the responsive song was raised, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in."* The inference might thence be drawn, that he who thus ascended† will so come, in like manner attended by an angelic escort; but we are not left to inference; the testimonies of Scripture are most explicit.

Thus, so early as the time of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, the Lord's second coming was foretold, and the attendance of angels was one of the facts revealed in connexion with that event, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints."‡ The expression, "*saints*," is here used in the same sense as in Deut. xxxiii. 2, "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto

* Psalm xxiv. 7.

† Compare also Psalm xlvii. 5, with the text.

‡ Jude 14.

them: he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints." This was on the occasion of the giving of that law which, we are told, was "ordained by *angels*,"* and which the Israelites received "by the disposition of *angels*."† Thus the *saints* on Mount Sinai are shown to be *angels*. And so in another passage bearing upon this subject the term "*saints*" signifies *holy angels*. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the *saints* with thee:"‡ or, to use our Saviour's own words, "The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the *holy angels* with him."§

The countless numbers who will then attend may be gathered from these expressions, "*all the saints*"—"all the holy angels with him." All that were seen by Daniel, attending on the Ancient of days, as he describes them, "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."|| All that were heard by St. John raising the song of praise to the Lamb, "I heard (he says) the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,"¶ all will be present to attend

* Gal. iii. 19.

† Acts vii. 53.

‡ Zech. xiv. 5.

§ Matt. xxv. 31.

|| Dan. vii. 10.

¶ Rev. v. 11.

the Son of God—"an innumerable company of angels."* Whether any distinction is to be made between the angels of the Father, some Scriptures speaking of "the angels of God," and the angels of the Son, some, again, speaking of "his mighty angels," it matters not; all will be there—"all the saints"—"all the holy angels"—whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, when they hear the expected signal, all will hasten to swell the train of him who "shall come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels."†

This signal is the shout spoken of in the text. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout."

Here we must pause and examine our text, for it will be found to throw much light on this interesting subject. The apostle, in this passage, adverts to the Second Advent, as a topic of consolation to those who were mourning the loss of departed friends. He is thus led to a detail of some of the circumstances of that glorious event. Of this detail our text is the commencement. "For the Lord HIMSELF shall descend from heaven." "This same Jesus"‡ shall come. He will not depute another. He will not send even the highest of the highest order of the

* Heb. xii. 22. † Mark viii. 38. ‡ Acts i. 11.

hosts of heaven as his representative ; he will come himself: " The Lord himself shall descend from heaven (and that) with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."

Here are three sounds: the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. It is important, for the right understanding of the passage, to ascertain by whom these sounds are uttered, and to whom they are addressed.

1. *The shout.* This, it would seem, is uttered by the Lord, and addressed to the angels. Various opinions have been entertained on this point, and some have thought that the shout is uttered by the assembled angels. But the word in the original conveys the idea of a word of command: *Keleusma* was the commander's shout of encouragement, either to seamen rowing, or to soldiers in battle. It is rather " the shout of a King,"* than the shout of a great company. Assuming, on these grounds, that the shout is uttered by our Lord, we have also to show that it is addressed to the angels. This will appear when we have explained the other parts of the text.

2. *The voice of the archangel.* There can be no question by whom this sound is uttered. It so far explains itself, it is *the voice of an archangel*. A measure of obscurity, however, attaches to the

* Numb. xxiii. 21.

term *archangel*, the name occurring in only one other passage of Scripture, (Jude 9,) "Michael the archangel." That there are various orders, ranks, and gradations, among the heavenly hosts, appears from the several titles assigned to them in the New Testament, "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers;"* as "one star differeth from another star," so one order of angels from another order, in glory. But whether the title, archangel, describes the chief *order* of angels, or only an *individual* chief angel, does not appear. Possibly, the circumstance of the word, "archangel," occurring only in the singular, whereas those words which describe *orders* of angels are chiefly in the plural, would lead to the conclusion, that the archangel is *an individual* angel, whom God in his unsearchable wisdom has placed above the rest. But where Scripture says so little, it becomes us to speak with great diffidence; nor does it affect our view of the subject whether this voice be uttered by one chief angel, called the archangel, or by one of an order called archangels. This is certain, it is an archangel's voice. To whom it is uttered will appear as we proceed.

3. *The trump of God* is the last point that requires explanation. This, there is reason to believe, is the voice of the Lord himself. In the

* Col. i. 16.

fifth chapter of St. John, and twenty-eighth verse, our Saviour declares, with great solemnity, that "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear *the voice of the Son of God*, and shall come forth;" of which exertion of Almighty power he gave a pledge and token, when standing by the grave he cried, with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth."* With this our Saviour's declaration, compare the words of St. Paul, (1 Cor. xv. 52.) "The *trumpet* shall sound, and the dead shall be raised." In the one passage, the dead are said to be raised by the voice of the Son of God; in the other, by the sounding of the trumpet. Whence we infer, that this trumpet sound is the same as the voice of the Son of God,—that voice of Jehovah, which, "powerful and full of majesty,"† will not only break the cedars and shake the wilderness, but will penetrate the inmost recesses of the tomb. When the inspired writer of the Apocalypse would describe the loud, clear, penetrating sound of the voice that spake with him, he says, "I heard behind me a great voice, as of a *trumpet*."‡ And again, "The first voice which I heard was, as it were, of a trumpet talking with me."§ In both which instances the trumpet

* John xi. 43, 44.

† Psalm xxix. 4, 5, 8.

‡ Rev. i. 10.

§ Rev. i. 1.

uttered the articulate and intelligible sounds of the human voice. Such a voice, we conceive, is intended by the trump of God.

But there is a peculiar beauty and propriety in calling the voice of the Lord when he summons the dead from their graves "*the trump of God.*" Under the old dispensation it was appointed, that trumpets should be used for two purposes: for sounding an alarm; and for assembling the congregation.* Both these purposes will the voice of God answer: in the ear of every careless and ungodly sinner it will sound an alarm; and it will assemble the congregation of the redeemed, whose bodies, rising from the dust and re-united to their souls, will, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, come forth, at the voice of the Son of God.

We must not leave this part of our subjects without further observing, that there was one special occasion, under the ceremonial dispensation, when it was appointed that trumpets should be blown, namely, at the commencement of the year of jubilee. This acceptable year of the Lord, bringing with it rest from toil, release from debts, the restoration of bond-servants, and the reversion of the mortgaged inheritance, was announced by the sound of the trumpet. When that sound was

* Joel ii. 1. 15.

heard the labourer rested from his work, the debtor was released from his debts, the bond-servant returned to his family, and the inheritance was restored to the original possessor. It is admitted, that all this was typical of the preaching of the Gospel, and of the release which the Gospel proclaims to the weary bond-servants of Satan; to debt-bound, broken, ruined sinners. But the perfect and complete antitype of the year of jubilee is that glory which the trump of God will announce. Then the rest that remaineth to the people of God will be enjoyed in body as well as soul. Then the debt of sin will be publicly cancelled. Then they who were once the servants of Satan will be recognised before an assembled world, "as the blessed children of the Father." And the inheritance of the earth forfeited by sin and usurped by the God of this world, will revert to those to whom it was originally given, and they shall inherit "the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world."*

Our conclusion, then, concerning the trump of God is, that it is the voice of the Son of God calling the dead from their graves; the trumpet of alarm to the ungodly; the trumpet of assembly to the redeemed of the Lord; the jubilee trumpet, proclaiming rest and release to all them that love his appearing.

* Matt. xxv. 24.

We have now ascertained by whom these three sounds are severally uttered,—the *shout* by the Lord, the *voice* by the archangel, and the *trump of God* by the Lord. To whom they are addressed is yet to be shown. In the last instance it is at once obvious, that to the inhabitants of the earth, whether quick or dead, the trump of God is sounded. To the *dead*,—for when “the trumpet shall sound the dead shall be raised,”*—“all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God.” And of the *quick* it is said, “We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye *at the last trump*.”†

Having thus shown that one of the sounds uttered by our Lord is addressed to the earth, the way is now cleared for establishing what has been already assumed concerning the shout, namely, that it is addressed to the hosts of heaven. If we turn to the 50th Psalm, verse 4, (a portion of Scripture which bears a plain allusion to the Second Advent,) we read that when “our God shall come,” “he shall call to the *heavens* from above, and to the *earth*, that he may judge his people.” The call to the earth, as we have seen, is the trump of God. It therefore remains that the shout uttered by the Lord is the call to the heavens, i.e., to the inhabitants of the heavens—the holy angels.

* 1 Cor. xv. 52; John v. 28.

† 1 Cor. xv. 52.

And this call the angels will instantly obey; the archangel, *with loud voice, making answer* in behalf of the obedient myriads that they are all present at their Lord's command. Now, at this time, and until the Saviour comes again, some of the angels are employed as ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. Some are ascending and descending in discharge of these services of love. Others are standing in the presence of the Eternal Father, crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts!" filling the courts of heaven with songs of praise. But then in an instant the song will cease,—the service of love will no longer be required. *All* the holy angels will be bidden to attend on Jesus, the first-begotten; whom when the Father bringeth again into the world, he saith, "Let *all the angels* of God worship him."* The voice of the archangel, therefore, we take to be the reply of the angelic hosts, uttered by their chief in answer to the Saviour's shout.

Since, then, the Scriptures so plainly state that all the angels will attend, and, moreover, declare that it is the express appointment of the Father that they shall attend the Lord Jesus at his coming, we may,

III. Inquire, Why, for what purposes, they will attend? For two purposes: *First*, to display the Saviour's glory; *Secondly*, to do the Saviour's will.

* Heb. i. 6.

1. That one object of the attendance of the heavenly hosts is to display the Saviour's glory, may be gathered from our Lord's own words,—“When the Son of man shall come in the *glory* of his Father, and all the holy angels with him.”* And again, “The Son of man shall come in the *glory* of his Father, with his angels.”† To which last the parallel in St. Luke is, “When he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of (i.e., in the glory of) the holy angels.”‡

The leading idea in these passages is the Saviour's glory at his coming; and the angels are introduced as contributing to the *manifestation* of that glory. Nor is it difficult to conceive how they will contribute. For if the sight of a single angel at the sepulchre was so imposing, “his countenance like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men;”§ if there was something so striking in the manner and mien of one of these heavenly messengers, that even the beloved apostle fell down before his feet to worship,|| who can conceive the glory of *all* the holy angels, and the Lord of Glory outshining them all?

But further, the Saviour's glory will be manifested by the attendance of angels, in that their

* Matt. xxv. 31. † Matt. xvi. 26. ‡ Luke ix. 26.

§ Matt. xxviii. 3, 4. || Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 8.

presence will be the testimony before the assembled world of his righteousness, and of the Father's approval. As Messiah's condemnation was public before the world, so hath the Father appointed that his righteousness shall be publicly approved before the whole universe. Sufficient, indeed, in proof of his righteousness, is his resurrection from the dead ; and where the Holy Ghost works upon the heart, he thus convinces of the Saviour's righteousness.* But how many in every age, like the chief priests and elders who bribed the soldiers, will not see. But, at his second coming, " they shall see ;" for " the heavens shall declare his righteousness, and all the people shall see his glory."† These heavenly hosts will declare his righteousness, because receiving the command to attend him from the Father, they will show that this is he whom the Father delighteth to honour. If a king sends the attendants of his own royal person to swell the train of some distinguished visitor, it is the highest proof of the estimation in which the sovereign holds him. So " the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see," will show the appearing of Jesus Christ.‡ Unseen himself, he

* John xvi. 8, 10. † Ps. xcvi. 6. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

will send all his holy angels to declare that this is the Son in whom he is well pleased.

2. The other end for which the heavenly hosts will attend is to do the Saviour's will. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations."* This gathering will be the work of the angels. They are the reapers, who in this time of harvest will both gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, and will gather the wheat into the Saviour's barn.† And they will act under the express direction of the great Householder:—"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."‡ And, again, "At the end of the world" (that is, this dispensation) "the angels shall come forth," (summoned by the Saviour's shout,) "and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."§

But while some are thus the executioners of the Lord's wrath upon the ungodly, others will be employed as the agents of his love and mercy towards his people. That trumpet sound, which

* Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

† Ibid. xiii. 30—39.

‡ Ibid. xiii. 41.

§ Ibid. xiii. 49, 50.

will penetrate the tomb, and pierce with awful alarm the hearts of the wicked, will to them that love his appearing be the sound of Jubilee,—the signal for their assembling to meet the Lord in the air. “He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other.”* And if his elect long for their Lord’s appearing, no less does he look for their gathering together unto him; for when he calls to the heavens from above, when he descends from heaven with a shout, this will be his first command to the angelic host:—“Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.”† How safe, how secure from the convulsions of that great day, will they be who are their Saviour’s first concern,—whom he will commit to the charge of the angels that excel in strength, the holy, loving, obedient attendants of his person.

Having thus investigated the points proposed;—the agency and character of angels; their attendance in the day of Christ; and the purposes for which they will attend;—we proceed to make a few concluding remarks.

The grandeur of the day of Christ, like the pillar of cloud and of fire before the host of Israel,

* Matt. xxiv. 31.

† Psalm l. 4, 5.

bears a double aspect. To the ungodly, the careless, the worldly-minded formalist, that day will be "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness."* But to those who love, and serve, and long for the appearing of Jesus Christ, it will be "as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds."†

Let the former think of it with fear and trembling. The terrors of Sinai were so awful that the Israelites trembled; (yea, "so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake;") but that was "the *hiding* of his power;"‡ this will be the manifestation of his power,—"THE POWER and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ."§ "Who, then, may abide the day of his coming? Who shall stand when he appeareth?"|| If the shout of the children of Israel, and the sounding of their trumpets, shook the walls of Jericho that they fell down flat, how can you stand before the shout of the Lord Jesus and the trump of God? "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." Let every imagination and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ be cast down: let every thought be brought into

* Joel ii. 2. † 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. ‡ Hab. iii. 4.

§ 2 Pet. i. 16. || Mal. iii. 2.

captivity to the obedience of Christ. Now, while it is called To-day, seek the washing of a Saviour's blood, the clothing of a Saviour's righteousness. "Enter into the rock (that rock is Christ), and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty."* See to it, that you be not tares, whom the reapers will bind in bundles to burn. Seek that you may be found to be wheat to be gathered into the Saviour's barn, when he "shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."†

To you who have heard the voice of the Lord speaking by his Holy Spirit to your hearts,—whom the thunders of Sinai, and the threatenings of the law, have driven to flee for refuge to a crucified Saviour,—to you, who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice, renouncing all but his blood as the ground of your hope, receiving all from his fulness to justify and to make you meet for the heavenly inheritance;—to you we say, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." Even now hath he "given his angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways;"‡ in those fiery trials which shall precede his coming, and prepare and purge and purify his Church,

* Isa. ii. 10. † 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. ‡ Ps. xci. 11.

“the angel of the Lord shall encamp round about those who fear him, and deliver them.”* And when at length the shout from heaven is heard, and the archangel’s voice replies, and the trump of God sounds forth, then will these ministering spirits, who have all along attended unseen upon the heirs of salvation, appear in all their strength and holiness and love and obedience, to gather you, and guard you, and convey you safely to your Lord.

* Ps. xxxiv. 7.

LECTURE VI.

THE TRANSLATION OF THE LIVING SAINTS.

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1 THESS. IV. 17. Former Part.

“ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.”

THE subject which I am to bring before you this evening, and which is contained in the words of the Apostle now read for our text, is indeed, one upon which we may enter with peculiar interest; because the events here stated and referred to, are those in which you and I, my brethren, if we be the people of God, if we be what we profess,—true Christians, shall soon have a personal share. For if we “*have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us,*” we are heirs of the promises,

and all the blessings that are contained and conveyed in those promises, are secured to us by the covenant engagements of our covenant-keeping God; and no power of earth or hell can hinder our possession and enjoyment of the purchased inheritance. So that we must either be the partakers of the first resurrection, spoken of in the former verse, and referred to in this, or we shall experience that translation which is here described.*

And, my brethren, amidst all the uncertainties of the future, which the anticipating power of man can contemplate; how delightful, how comforting, how satisfying, to be able to look forward to something, not only excellent in itself, and far more desirable than any other object on which the heart of man can fix; but which is also sure and certain in its accomplishment. Such is the second coming of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the great and glorious realities connected with that event. For though it be the privilege of the true Christian to be assured, *that all things shall work together for his good*, yet, as regards the particular circumstances of his future course, and the trials and difficulties under which he may be speedily placed, *he "knoweth not what a day may bring forth."* (Prov. xxvii. 1.) He has indeed the

* Ephes. i. 14; Rom. viii. 23; Luke xxi. 28.

assurance, and it is a blessed truth to his soul, that his God *will never leave him nor forsake him* ; yet there is no SPECIFIC EVENT, on which his mind can settle with equal certainty as on the one now before us. For, says the Apostle, “ *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : (for the trumpet shall sound,) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*” (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.) There is, indeed, nothing certain in the future to which we can look, but what God has declared or promised ; and all the promises of God, exceeding great and precious as they are, (taken from the commencement of his gracious communication with fallen man in the garden of Eden, until the close of this present dispensation ;) ALL have reference to, and seem to be included in, THIS GREAT EVENT, THE SECOND COMING OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST ; which is, and which ever has been, EMPHATICALLY, THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH.

Even before the first advent of our blessed Lord the eye of faith discerned His second coming, and to it the saints looked forward in the expectation of hope and desire. The patriarch, Job, exclaims, in that well-known passage, “ *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : And though after my*

skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." (Job xix. 25—27.) And it seems evident from the Apostle's words in the third chapter of Acts, that the principal and full meaning of the prediction of Moses, in Deut. xviii. 15, "*the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto him ye shall hearken ;*" will not be full yaccomplished till this great event arrives ; for, if we turn to the third chapter of Acts, we read, "*Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord : AND HE SHALL SEND JESUS CHRIST, which before was preached unto you : WHOM THE HEAVENS MUST RECEIVE UNTIL THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me ; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul that will not hear THAT PROPHET, shall be destroyed from among the people.*" (Acts iii. 19—23.)

Now the connexion in which this is placed, as

well as the truth declared in the twenty-third verse, clearly shews that it refers to a period yet to come, when those who will not hear Him,—who will not have Christ to reign over them,—shall be treated as His enemies, and slain before Him. (Luke xix. 27.)

David also frequently expresses his faith, hope, and desire, with reference to this event, "*I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*" (Psalm ii. 7—12.) "*As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" (Psalm xvii. 15.) And though there be in these passages no distinct mention of the second coming, yet the events here described are intimately connected with it.

If, then, we look at the promises of our Lord's first coming, we shall see, that notwithstanding all

the important purposes which he THEN came to fulfil, His SECOND COMING IN GLORY is still THE GREAT EVENT HELD OUT TO VIEW, as the end for which He first came in humility. For instance, in the following passage, "*Thou shalt bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest :* AND THE LORD GOD SHALL GIVE UNTO HIM THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID: AND HE SHALL REIGN OVER THE HOUSE OF JACOB FOR EVER; AND OF HIS KINGDOM THERE SHALL BE NO END." (Luke i. 31—33.) And again, in the ninth chapter of Isaiah, "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, THE PRINCE OF PEACE. OF THE INCREASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT AND PEACE THERE SHALL BE NO END, UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID, AND UPON HIS KINGDOM, TO ORDER IT, AND TO ESTABLISH IT WITH JUDGMENT AND WITH JUSTICE FROM HENCEFORTH EVEN FOR EVER.*" (Isaiah ix. 6, 7.)

He left the crown for the cross, that He might through the cross purchase to Himself a kingdom; in the construction and establishment of which would be exhibited, not merely the vastness of His creative power, but also the infinite excellence

of His gracious attributes. The eternity of His unsearchable love; the unfathomable depth of His manifold wisdom; the unbounded extent of His sovereign mercy:—since all the members of that kingdom, will be the objects of His redeeming love; the recipients of His sanctifying Spirit; the trophies of His conquering grace. And when the number of the Father's choice, and of the Son's charge shall be accomplished; and the prayer fulfilled which we read in John xvii. 21, "*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;*" THEN will the world believe that JESUS WAS THE SENT OF GOD; THEN will they know that the Church owes all to the fountain of free eternal love (John xvii. 23); and the Lord will "*be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.*" (2 Thess. i. 10.)

The words of the text, lead us forward to the time WHEN the mystical body of Christ shall be perfected; WHEN, to use the Apostle's words, "*we (shall) all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*" (Eph. iv. 13.)

The last stroke, then, in the completion of His body, is the subject for our consideration to-night,—The translation of the living saints: "*Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up*

together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

In these words we have the following points to consider :—

The time when this translation is to take place.

The persons who are the subjects of it.

The condition and manner in which it is to be effected; and,

The purpose for which it is designed.

It is then, on these subjects that I propose to speak, as the Lord may help me, only reversing the position in which the first and second points stand in our text, in order that we may first clearly see to what description of character the blessings here described belong; for, my brethren, all our real enjoyment of the present subject must depend upon our discerning in ourselves those characteristic marks which alone prove our individual interest in the blessings about to be revealed; and which form the necessary meetness for the coming glory.

Let us then consider,—

I. THE PERSONS WHO ARE TO BE THE SUBJECTS OF THE TRANSLATION HERE DESCRIBED.

II. THE TIME WHEN THIS TRANSLATION IS TO TAKE PLACE.

III. THE CONDITION AND MANNER IN WHICH IT WILL BE EFFECTED.

IV. THE END FOR WHICH IT IS DESIGNED.

I. THEN, THE PERSONS WHO ARE TO BE THE SUBJECTS OF THE TRANSLATION HERE DESCRIBED, "*we which are alive and remain.*" This expression limits it to persons of a certain character and condition ; as, in the subject treated of in the former verses, the terms, "*sleep in Jesus,*" "*dead in Christ,*" confine the resurrection there spoken of to the people of God ; and as it is *not all the dead, but only those that answer the description there given*, that will THEN be raised, so it is *not all that are alive* on the earth, at the time to which our text refers, that will be translated, but ONLY THOSE who are included under the expression, WE. Now it is quite clear, that this expression, WE, limits the blessing to those who are partakers of like precious faith with the Apostle and the Thessalonian converts ; to those in whom the graces of faith, hope, and love, dwell ; manifesting their existence by the effects which they produce.

If we turn to the description of those to whom the Apostle was writing, we shall see that the reality of their profession was exhibited,—

1st. BY THEIR RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL.

2d. BY THEIR CONFORMITY TO THE GOSPEL.

3d. BY THEIR HOPE IN THE GOSPEL.

1st. The Gospel message came to them "*not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*" (1 Thess. i. 5); "*they received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God*" (1 Thess. ii. 13); and it wrought effectually in their hearts, imparting to them joy and peace in believing.

2d. THEY WERE ALSO CONFORMED TO THE GOSPEL. They became followers of the Apostle and of the Lord in these respects: they were influenced by the same principle, *the love of God*; governed by the same rule, even by *the revealed will of God*; living for the same object, even *the glory of God*. (1 Thess. i. 6.) They were not merely recipients of the truth, but also imparters of it to others, "*For,*" says the Apostle, "*from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.*" (1 Thess. i. 8, 9.)

3d. THEIR HOPE IN THE GOSPEL FORMED A DISTINGUISHING FEATURE IN THEIR CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.—They were waiting for the second coming of the Son of God.

Waiting in faith,—believing that He would come.

Waiting in hope,—expecting then the completion of their salvation.

Waiting in love,—longing to see Him, to be like Him, and to be with Him; in whose *presence alone* “*is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*” (Psalm xvi. 11.)

Such, then, are the characteristic marks of those who shall be partakers OF THE TRANSLATION of which our text speaks. *They are those who have received the Gospel; who have been conformed to the Gospel; and who shall be waiting in faith, hope, and love, for the great and glorious blessings which the Gospel holds out.*

Their condition is simply this;—their being *alive* on the earth at the time of the coming of the day of the Lord.

Now, my dear brethren, it is an all-important point for us to ascertain individually, whether *we* have these distinguishing features of the true people of God; for it is only such that will be partakers of any blessing when the Lord shall come.

If we know nothing in our own experience of the *awakening, transforming, animating* power of the Gospel, we are *not* prepared for this great event; and should the translation, of which we are to speak, take place to-night, while others

would be taken, perfected, and glorified, we should be left under that awful, withering sentence, "*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.*" (Rev. xxii. 11.)

But, on the other hand, if we have received the truth, not in word only, but in power;—if we have been taught by it to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"* (Titus ii. 12, 13);—then, notwithstanding the manifold imperfections which we daily feel, and daily lament; notwithstanding the doubts and fears, which may sometimes distress and harass our minds, as to whether we be among the people of God or not, (for we are not ignorant of the devices of Satan, who sometimes distresses those whom he cannot destroy, by obscuring from their own perception the work of grace in their souls); still, if we can trace in ourselves *these* characteristic marks of which we have been speaking, then we may bid farewell to every fear and wipe our weeping eyes. We may look back with wonder, gratitude, and joy, beholding the eternal fountain of electing love, from whence the streams of grace have flowed to us; (for by these marks we may know respecting

ourselves, as the Apostle did concerning the Thessalonians, "*our election of God ;*") and we may look forward with confidence, and anticipating hope, *to the fulness of joy*, the unfathomable ocean of endless bliss, into which the streams of grace are most surely conducting us. We may take up the words of the Apostle, "*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Phil. i. 21); or in the anticipation of the near approach of the day of the Lord, "*we may lift up our heads*" with joy, being assured, "*that our redemption draweth nigh*" (Luke xxi. 28); and that, "*when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.*" (Col. iii. 4.)

But we proceed to consider, in the second place,—

II. THE TIME WHEN THIS TRANS- LATION IS TO TAKE PLACE.

The word, THEN, with which this verse commences, evidently shews, that the event herein described is subsequent to that resurrection mentioned in the previous verse, (*then*, meaning, not at the same time, but next in order,) in which the Apostle very particularly specifies the time with reference to the resurrection of the saints, when the living saints are to be changed. He says, "*We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them that*

are asleep" (that is, shall not be glorified before them); "*for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: THEN,*" (after that) "*we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.*"

This word, THEN, while it clearly points to the priority of the resurrection before mentioned, also connects THE EVENT now under consideration with the Lord's descent. But here let us remark, it is not His descent to the earth, for the saints are to be "*caught up to meet the Lord in the air,*" but His descent to some locality in which He may be visible to mortal eyes. This descent seems to refer to the same event as that which is described by St. Matt. xxiv. 30—33, as the appearing of the sign of the Son of Man; for we read, "*Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming,*" (not actually come,) "*in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And,*" (i.e., at the same time, when this sign appears, the translation, of which we are now speaking, and which we have described in the following words, will take place,) "*he shall send his angels with a great sound of a*

trumpet ; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other." And the parable, by which our blessed Lord illustrates the truth of which He was speaking, clearly manifests that *His descent and appearing*, though a sure sign of *His second coming*, and, as it were, *the commencement* of that event, is yet distinct from it. For it is WHEN we "*see all these things,*" that we are to know, "*that He is near, even at the doors*" (but not actually arrived). The same truth is clearly stated in Mark xiii. 26—29, and also in Luke xxi. 27—31.

This, then, is the time to which the words of the text refer ; the appearing "*of the sign of the Son of Man in heaven*" (Matt. xxiv. 30) ; the seeing "*of the Son of Man coming in a cloud.*" (Luke xxii. 27.) It is after the resurrection of the saints, but previous to the Lord's descent to the earth ; for when the Lord shall come, He will bring all His saints with Him. (Zech. xiv. 5.) This subject is further described in Matt. xxiv. 40, 41, "*Then shall two be in the field ; one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; one shall be taken, and the other left.*" It is for this appearing that we are desired to watch.

It is possible, that some time may elapse between the Lord's glorious appearing and His

actual descent to the earth; for I am inclined to think, that after the former of these events,—subsequent to the translation of His people, and previous to His coming with all His saints, to *reign literally in Mount Zion* (Isa. xxiv. 23), and to “*be king over all the earth*” (Zech. xiv. 9),—judgment and fiery indignation will be poured out upon unbelieving Christendom. For though it appears, that previous to the Lord’s glorious appearing, and while His living saints are on the earth, “*there will be great tribulation, such as never was, not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened*” (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22), clearly intimating, that in these trials the people of God will suffer as well as others; yet they will be removed before the OTHER JUDGMENTS, such as those described in Isaiah xxiv. 1—6, come upon the earth, “*Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the*

giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled : for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof ; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate : therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." And again, in the same chapter, from the seventeenth verse to the end, "*Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit ; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare : for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage ; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it ; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall*

be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." Before these judgments are poured out, the saints will be translated from the earth and taken up to meet the Lord in the air.

In the twenty-sixth chapter we find it stated, "*In that day,*" (meaning the day of the Lord's judgments upon the unbelieving world,) "*In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah ; We have a strong city ; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee : because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever : for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.*" (Isa. xxvi. 1—4.) And, in the concluding verses of this chapter, we seem to have an account of the events referred to by the apostle in the passage before us. In the nineteenth verse, (which we quote according to the original text, omitting the words in italics,) we have a description of the resurrection of believers : "*Thy dead shall live, my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust : for*

thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." And the twentieth verse, I conceive, refers to the translation of the living saints to a place of safety and peace; and their consequent exemption from the punishment spoken of in the twenty-first verse, "*Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*" (Isaiah xxvi. 20, 21.)

It is the promise to the Lord's people recorded in Isaiah xxxii. 18, 19, "*My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places; When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.*" Added to which, our blessed Lord gives this exhortation to those who see the signs of His advent approaching, "*Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that shall dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall*

come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."
(Luke xxi. 34—36.)

The same truth seems also set forth in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation, seventh to sixteenth verse, where the marriage supper of the Lamb is represented as taking place, previous to the Lord going forth on the white horse to punish the inhabitants of the earth.

This, then, is the time, when I apprehend the event described will take place: at the appearing of the Lord, immediately after the resurrection of the dead in Christ; immediately before those judgments which precede the introduction of the millennial glory, and the establishment of the reign of peace. Just as it was with Lot, when the Lord overthrew the cities of the plain, nothing could be done till he was conveyed into a place of safety; so, before God will pour forth his wrath and fiery indignation upon the unbelieving world, his people will be caught up into a place of safety, security, and peace, "*Only with their eyes shall they behold, and see the reward of the wicked.*" (Psalm xci. 8.)

We may just observe, before we leave this point, that the Apostle seems to make that distinction between the appearing of the Lord, and his actual descent to the earth, "*When his feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives*" (Zech. xiv. 4), to which we have referred. He speaks, in 2 Tim.

iv. 1, of "*His appearing, and kingdom;*" and it is to the former, as being the commencement of the GREAT EVENT, (which, speaking in a general way, we call the second advent,) that the people of God are directed to be looking, as the period when their hopes will be realized. For instance, in Titus ii. 13, the Apostle thus writes, "*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

And it is THEN, also, they are assured their rest will be gained, "*And to you who are troubled, (says the Apostle) rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.*" (2 Thess. i. 7—10.)

It is, moreover, the commendation given by the Apostle to the Corinthians, "*that they came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming (that is, the revelation, or appearing) of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1 Cor. i. 7.) Such, then, is THE TIME when the event spoken of in our text shall take place.

But we pass on to the consideration of the third point.

III. THE CONDITION AND MANNER IN WHICH THIS TRANSLATION IS TO BE EFFECTED.

Now, on entering on this point, there are two subjects upon which we must speak. The first is *implied*; the second *stated*.

1st, Then, in the words before us, this CHANGE OF SITUATION which the saints of the Lord are to experience at his APPEARING, clearly *implies* their CHANGE OF CONDITION; by which I mean, that spiritual, mental, and physical change, in which their likeness to their Saviour God will be completed.

This we believe is clearly implied, because if we here read that at the commencement of this event, "*The LORD HIMSELF shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air*" (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17); we find it also declared in 1 Cor. xv. 50—54, that at the same sound, the living saints will be changed, "*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit*

incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery ; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

In this present state there is indeed a conformity to Christ in all his people, by which alone they can know that they are his, or be known of others to belong to Him, for "*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*" (1 John ii. 6) ; "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new.*" (2 Cor. v. 17.) They are now "*transformed by the renewing of their mind*" (Rom. xii. 2) ; and "*beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

But although they be recipients of the Spirit of Christ—partakers of the Divine nature—sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption ;

although the law of God be written on their hearts, and in some degree manifested in their lives, their members being instruments of righteousness unto holiness ; although there be in every one born of God, a conformity to Him in WILL, AFFECTION, and PURPOSE ; yet the seeds of evil still remain. While in their present condition, the effects of sin and corruption are not completely removed ; so that, though to *will is present*, they often find not *how to perform that which is good*. Though their affections approve what God commands, and hate what He forbids, yet they often have reason to exclaim, “ *The good that I would I do not : but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*” (Rom. vii. 19, 21.) And then, with reference to their present bodies, at one time they *find a law in their members bringing them into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members* ; so that the cry of the Apostle comes from their inmost soul, “ *O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?*” (Rom. vii. 24.)

And again, at other times, though the spirit be willing, the flesh is weak ; so that they “ *cannot do the things that they would.*” (Gal. v. 17.) The Christian in his best estate, in his present con-

dition, often "*groans, being burdened,*" earnestly desiring to be "*clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*" (2 Cor. v. 4.)

This, then, is that change in condition, which it is implied in our text will be effected at the sound of the trumpet, preparatory to their translation. THEN their likeness to their Saviour God will be perfected in spirit, soul, and body. There will THEN be no more experience of the workings of spiritual evils, such as pride, envy, malice, hatred, unbelief. All these evils, the bitter enemies of man's happiness, will have fallen to rise no more. And the mind of Christ, in all its excellence of holiness, purity, and love, will reign unopposed in their peaceful breasts.

Their intellectual powers and faculties, which are now so contracted and limited in their exercise, that the more they know, only convinces them how little they know, will then be enlarged and perfected, so that they shall no longer *see through a glass darkly*, knowing only in part; but they "*shall see face to face, and know even as also they are known.*" (1 Cor. xiii. 12.)

No longer will fleshly lusts war against the soul; but all will be holiness, purity, love, and peace. The body, which now by its weaknesses and wants so often reminds them that it is the body of their humiliation, will be fashioned like

unto Christ's glorious body ; and instead of being a hindrance and a clog to the soul, will in all respects be fitted to aid it in the service of the Lord, and to participate in *those pleasures* which are "*at his right hand for evermore.*"

Such, briefly, is the change which it is clearly implied will take place in connexion with the translation here stated. But, after all that we can say, "*it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.*" (1 John iii. 2.)

Wondrous truth ! we shall be like Christ ; and this assimilation will be completed by vision ; we shall be like Him, "*for we shall see Him as He is ;*" and it will be effected "*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye !*"

Now, dear brethren, let us ever bear in mind that this change of condition in the living saints is the consummation of the work of grace ; the completion of that change which has been progressively advancing during life under the Spirit's power ; and that where there has been no change by grace here, there will be no glory hereafter ;—where there has been no conflict *with sin*, there will be no victory *over sin*.

2d. But we pass on to *the subject stated*. They that are alive will be caught up in the clouds, that

is, translated that they shall not see death; as Enoch was. But it is also declared that in this translation they will be the companions of the risen saints, "*caught up together with THEM in the clouds.*" This seems evidently to intimate the perfecting of the mystical body of Christ, and the reunion of the people of God.

Now, in this present state, as believers, we are members of one family—fellow-citizens with the saints—parts of one body, though not visibly united; but then we shall be one, as our Lord expresses it, John xvii. 23, "*I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.*" There will then be complete union and communion between the people of the Lord; and they will then meet to part no more.

But the last point which we were to notice is,—

IV. THE END FOR WHICH THIS TRANSLATION IS DESIGNED.

This we have stated in the words before us, "*to meet the Lord in the air.*" It is, that our blessed Lord's declaration may be fulfilled, "*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*" (John xiv. 2, 3.) And His prayer in John xvii. 24, answered, "*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I*

am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

They are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, for two reasons, I conceive,

1st. As it has been already stated, that they may be in a place of safety, peace, and happiness, while the judgments are being poured out on those who have rejected the Gospel, and would not have Christ to reign over them ; and,

2dly. That the Lord Jesus Christ may come the second time, not only PERSONALLY, SUBSTANTIALLY, and VISIBLY, but also with His mystical body complete. For as the loss of any member of our body causes some degree of deformity, so, if it were possible for Christ to appear with only a part of His body, the beauty and symmetry of the whole would be marred ; but when He shall appear in glory, then shall the whole Church, *which is His body*, "*appear also with Him in glory*," and be His happy attendants when He shall come "*to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe*."

But we further notice, that this meeting of the saints with the Lord in the air will be a PEACEFUL MEETING, as described in Isaiah xii. 1—3, "*And in that day thou, (i.e., the Church,) shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee : though thou wast angry*

with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid : for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song ; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

Again, it will be a meeting attended with MUTUAL JOY. Union has been *the one* great object of desire, both of the Lord and of the Church. The Lord "*loved the Church, and gave himself for it ; That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing : but that it should be holy and without blemish.*" (Eph. v. 25, 27.) In Psalm xlv. 10, 11, the Church is thus addressed, "*Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear ; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house ; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty ; for he is thy Lord ; and worship thou him.*"

The desire of the Church is also expressed by the Psalmist, "*My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God ?*" (Psalm xlii. 2,) "*Make no tarrying, O my God.*" (Psalm xl. 17.)

In the Book of Canticles, viii. 14, the Church is represented as thus speaking, "*Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices ;*" and to the

cheering declaration of the Bridegroom, "*Surely I come quickly,*" the Church responds, "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*" (Rev. xxii. 20.) If such, then, be the mutual desires of Christ and of His Church, there will be mutual joy in the complete attainment of this longed-for object; and so it is represented in Isaiah lxii. 5, "*For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.*" Then "*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*" (Isaiah liii. 11), when He beholds a countless multitude of human beings, redeemed by His blood, justified in His righteousness, sanctified by His grace, and made "*meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*" (Col. i. 12.)

The joy of the Church is also beautifully described in Isaiah lxi. 10, "*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*"

But again, it will be a *glorious meeting*. He will glorify His Church, by conferring his own glory upon it. And the Church will glorify Him, by exhibiting His glory. As it is described in Isaiah lxii. 3, where, speaking of the Lord's

people, it is said, "*Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.*"

But again, it will be A MEETING FOR THE SOLEMNIZATION OF THE MARRIAGE UNION. This is spoken of in Rev. xix. 7—9, "*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*"

In conclusion, let me entreat you, dear brethren, seriously to contemplate these great and glorious prospects which are set before you, in the sure word of our God; till your heart's affections are more called forth by them, and more fixed upon them. The Christian often travels slowly, and sadly in the narrow path of life; when it is his privilege to run, and that with joy, along the heaven-ward road. And what is the reason? Because he does not keep his faith, hope, and love in lively exercise, by frequent meditation on the glorious inheritance to which he is called by grace. Meditation will stir the affections, and

the affections will quicken every power into action : endeavour, then, daily to have this truth fixed in your minds ; and to go forth to all your different engagements and pursuits of life under its power. If I be a true Christian, if I be what I profess ; in all the glory which is yet to be revealed, I shall have a *personal share* ; that crown of glory, compared with which, all other crowns are worthless and as dross, is mine ; that inheritance which is incorruptible, that kingdom which is immovable, is mine. Endeavour to keep the end of your conversation ever in view : that you are to be united to the Lord ; to be partners of His throne, sharers in His glory ; and however great and unsearchable you may discover these blessings to be, seek to have it indelibly engraven on your hearts, that “ *Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.*” (1 Thess. v. 24.) “ *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful : he cannot deny himself*” (2 Tim. ii. 13) ; for with Him “ *is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*” (James i. 17.) Oh ! my dear brethren, if you could only exercise more of a “ *good hope through grace,*” of “ *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*” (1 Peter i. 4,) how would it animate you for every conflict,—comfort you under every sorrow ; for you would feel that the glory is worth contending for ; and that your conflicts,

trials, and sorrows, are light, and “*but for a moment,*” when compared with the “*eternal weight of glory*” which shall be conferred upon you. How would this anticipating hope support you under every trial! “*The night,*” you would feel, “*is far spent, the day is at hand;*” and, though “*weeping may endure for the night,*” you would know THAT “*JOY COMETH in the morning;*” that *death will ere long “be swallowed up in victory,*” and that “*the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.*” (Isaiah xxv. 8.) The hope of these blessings would also deaden the power of every temptation; the having respect unto the recompense of the reward would tend to give a lively sensibility of the emptiness of earthly pleasures; and greatly quicken, and energize your exertions in the resistance and expulsion of evil: “*For every man that hath this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure.*” (1 John iii. 3.)

LECTURE VII.

THE PERPETUAL ABODE OF THE CHURCH WITH CHRIST.

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1 THESS. V., part of 17th verse.

“ And so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

“ WHEREFORE,” adds the Apostle, “ comfort one another with these words.” And have we not in the compass of these few words the *quintessence* of all heavenly joy?

Sublime in its very simplicity, here lie concentrated the hopes of all the universal Church ; to this as their bright centre, converge all the rays of glory that ever dazzled the eye of Christian faith ; hither, as into an ocean of love, flow all the streams of the Divine promises, amply, abundantly fulfilled, yea, lost in the immeasurableness

of their own completion! Oh! dear brethren, standing on the margin of an eternity so glorious,—hoping, ere we turn to this world again, to measure somewhat of its length and breadth, and depth and height,—to grasp some feeble idea of its greatness and excellence,—shall we not lift up our hearts, with our eyes, to that Lamb of God, whose presence in the midst shall be the fountain of light and joy to the heavenly city?

May He endue us with spiritual sight! otherwise shall we turn from our precious subject as from the sun in the heavens, blinded by its glory—unprofited by its blessed truths; whereas, if Jesus is with us indeed, teaching the hearts of his faithful people, by sending to them the light of His Holy Spirit, then shall we have a right understanding in all things, and evermore rejoice in His holy comfort; and we shall return to our circle in the world, as Moses to his people, our faces shining with the splendour of that glory on which we have been permitted awhile to gaze.

It is a common idea, but false as common, that the study of subjects such as these begets an enthusiasm which unfits its votary for the discharge of social duties, and makes his religion rather visionary and speculative than wholesome and practical. Whatever of error man's infirmity

may graft upon it, St. Paul knew of no such tendency peculiar to the subject ; for the remarkable passage of the text follows immediately upon the sober exhortation of the eleventh verse, “ that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you ; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.” If, therefore, any Christian in waiting for his Lord, and looking for his return, ceases to regard his practical duties as diligently as ever, the inconsistency is *entirely* HIS OWN.

It is our lot, as sojourners in a strange land, to tread the path of sorrow which Jesus, our great Forerunner, has trodden before us. The Man of Sorrows is the Captain of our salvation. We cannot be followers of Him without being also sharers in His tribulation ; and He, knowing our frame, and remembering that we are but dust, has provided for us, all our journey through, *this blessed foretaste of our heavenly reward*. He has put into our hands the cup of joy, full to the brim with these exceeding precious promises ; He blesses it, and bids us, “ *Drink ye all of this ;*” nay more, he tells us to be fellow-helpers of each other’s joy—“ to comfort one another with these words.” And now, dear brethren in Christ, at this hour, we are assembled in His name to fulfil

this command ; and may He be truly in the midst of us, to bless us !

The subject of this evening is, THE PERPETUAL ABODE OF THE CHURCH WITH CHRIST.

It is asserted in the words of the text, corroborated, as I trust to show, by many another passage of the Divine Word, and forms the ultimate hope of every member of the mystical body of Christ.

Our inquiries will naturally be directed,

I. TO THE FACT ITSELF, WHICH BEING REVEALED, BEARS THE CHARACTER OF A PROMISE.

II. TO THE BEARING OF THIS PROMISE UPON OUR FAITH AND PATIENCE NOW.

A glance at the context will show that these words were spoken for the comfort of Christians under the trial of bereavement. To them the servant of God has this message concerning their beloved ones, who were dead in Christ :

“Sorrow not for their loss, even as *they* sorrow who have no hope in eternity ; weep not over *these*, as you would weep over *the dead in soul* ; for these are not dead, *they sleep in Jesus* ; and the hour of their triumph is nigh, inasmuch as the Lord is at hand ; and when He cometh, then shall He bring with him all that sleep in Jesus. Nay, so secure are they of their full inheritance of the

promise, that we may boldly say, that even should we be alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, we shall have no advantage over them that are asleep ; we shall not prevent (go before) them. The same moment at which *we* see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, shall *they* have risen from their graves, and shall see him likewise. The same shout that breaks upon *our* ears, shall wake *their* slumbers ; and all, both quick and dead, ready alike, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, *and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*"

The immediate purport of the words of the text is, to show the parity of privilege of the living in Christ, and the dead in Christ. The truth selected hence for our contemplation now, is incidental in its original position ; yet even there it forms the climax of the Christian hope.

" *So shall we EVER be with the Lord.*" It must be remarked, that the word " ever," a word of varied and extensive use in our language, should here be understood as signifying rather *continually* than *eternally* ; for this is the strict signification of the original Greek (*πάντοτε*) ; and it implies, that once united, there can be no separation ; nevertheless, many other passages of Scripture so plainly assert that the union of Christ with his Church

will be eternal, as well as continuous, that in this case we shall not err if we join the two ideas together in our view of the truth.*

It is not, however, right in the interpretation of Scripture, to forget the ambiguities of our language, as we might be led to draw erroneous conclusions through such an oversight. For instance, in Hebrews vii. 25, where the same word occurs, "Seeing he *ever* liveth to make intercession for them," it is absolutely necessary to remember that the word signifies *continuity*, not *eternity* of action; for the office of Christ, as our intercessor, will have its close, when He has brought all his people to glory. In the instance of the text, however, we may regard these two ideas, the *continuity* and the *perpetuity* of the abode of the Church with Christ, though separable in idea, as inseparably connected together in doctrine and reality; and to confirm this, let us now gather together in one the teaching of the Holy Scriptures upon it, ere we venture further suggestions of our own.

It has been revealed in the Word of God, that the kingdom of Christ shall not be a kingdom to endure only for a thousand years. Many are the passages that assert its eternal duration; that is, that Christ, the God-Man, shall reign in that

* See Note A.

capacity over his saints through all the ages of eternity.

Mark the principal of these passages :

Isaiah ix. 7. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever."

Daniel ii. 44. "In the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed ; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

vii. 14, 18, 27. "And there was given to him (the Son of Man) dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him ; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." "But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." "And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, shall be given to the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

So likewise, in Luke i. 32, 33, the angel Gabriel, speaking of Jesus, says,

“The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

Hebrews i. 8. “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”

2 Peter i. 11. “So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Rev. xi. 15. “The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

Now, from these and many other passages, we gather, that after the close of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, and the completion of the period of the millennial kingdom, there shall be a kingdom still, in which Christ shall reign; and this kingdom shall last through all eternity. There, on the throne of that kingdom, Christ shall retain his human nature still, which, in the words of the second Article of our faith, has been joined to his Divine nature, “*never to be divided*,” inasmuch as Christ, “because he continueth ever (*εἰς τὸν*

αιῶνα), hath an unchangeable priesthood." (Heb. vii. 24.) This important truth finds confirmation in many other passages of the Divine word; Jesus, our Forerunner, is for us entered within the veil, "made a High Priest *for ever*, after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. vi. 20.) "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." (x. 12.) "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (xiii. 8.)*

When once the undoubted truth of this fact is recognised, Christ, the God-Man, reigning in an everlasting, an unchangeable kingdom, we shall advance with less difficulty another step, and enquire, Over whom does he reign?

I might find an answer in many passages of the Prophets, where the abode of the Church with its Saviour is foretold, in the bringing in to him of his ancient people Israel; where the prophecy has doubtless its first fulfilment in the complete restoration of the Jewish nation, and its after more complete fulfilment, in the eternal union with Christ of that Church, of which the Jewish people were the type; passages in which the Lord is declared to be "their everlasting light, and their God their glory" (Isai. lx. 19, 20); where "the people shall be all righteousness, and inherit

* See Note B.

the land for ever" (ver. 21); where the Church is to the Lamb, as the bride is to the bridegroom (lxii. 4, 5); where "God in the midst of his people is mighty,—will rejoice over them with joy,—will rest in his love,—will joy over them with singing." (Zeph. iii. 17.) But, as some may be disposed to think lightly of this evidence, because it has a prior fulfilment in the restoration of the Jews, let us turn to those passages of the New Testament, in which Christ so speaks of his Church, as to leave us no doubt that it shall be His eternal possession, His everlasting inheritance; that He will dwell in the midst of it *for ever*.

John xiv. 3. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

xvii. 24. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Eph. ii. 6, 7. "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus."

Eph. iii. 20, 21. "Now unto Him that is

able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory *in the Church by Christ Jesus*, throughout all ages, world without end."

2 Tim. ii. 10—12. "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

Rev. iii. 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

vii. 17. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

xix. 7. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour unto Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."

xxi. 2—7. "And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his

people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said, Write; for these words are true and faithful: And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

xxii. 5. "There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

Here is the Scripture evidence of this truth; and mark, beloved brethren, how it gathers strength and clearness as it proceeds. At first, in the earlier days of prophecy, the eternal state of the Church of Christ is foretold in type and shadow, by the prophecy of the future temporal state of that people, who had been the visible representation of the Church of the living God; but the days come, when that veil is rent away, and then we hear the voice of Him, who loved

the Church, and gave himself for it, declaring that their eternal union with him shall be at once his happiness and theirs ;—that where he is, they shall be ;—he even prays the Father that they may be with him in his glory ;—this is declared to be the eternal purpose of God, that in this unbroken union he might shew in the ages to come, for ever and ever, the exceeding riches of his grace :—and brightening to its close, the Scripture unfolds, in the glowing words of the Revelation, which I have just read to you, the blessed, precious truth,—that the glory, the happiness, the peace of the Church, shall be as the glory, happiness, and peace of Christ himself ; in short, a spiritual marriage, in which there is no divorce, no separation ; whereby Christ and his Church are united for ever and ever !

Are there any professing and calling themselves Christians, to whom it is necessary to make these things plain ? There are indeed. Strange as it may sound, there are many true Christians who have been habituated to throw around all futurity such an air of mystery, that they never inquire what Scripture has revealed, if anything, concerning the things that shall be hereafter ; and their views of future glory are all comprehended under one vague idea of happiness above ; an idea which they have never striven to make more definite, by

throwing upon it the light of Scripture. This idea has been so strictly spiritual, that even the reunion of the body to the soul has scarcely seemed essential to its completeness; much less the perpetual abode with Christ, as the ever-living God-Man, the visible Head of his Redeemed Church. And from this indefiniteness of idea has sprung much lukewarmness in the Church, on the subject of the return of the Saviour, because their happiness, both as a Church and as individuals, has been portrayed to their minds, independent of that return. And the result has been,—no watchfulness for his coming,—no longing for his advent in glorious Majesty,—but only a looking for death, which should set them free from sin and sorrow, and to which, contrary to the dictates of all right reason, they applied most of the passages of Scripture foretelling the Saviour's advent.

Brethren in Christ, I here record my strong conviction, that this has been one powerful, though unsuspected, cause of the great decline in spirituality now to be marked in the outward Church of Christ, independent of any departure from orthodoxy of doctrine. Sure I am, that many a holy man of God, valiant for the truth in vital doctrines of religion, little suspected that in slurring over the page of prophecy, as a dim and unpractical part of the Divine Word, he was taking away that

lamp, the continual trimming of which was to be at once the sign and the means of our watching for the return of the Heavenly Bridegroom ! This studied neglect of the page of prophecy has wrought its mischief, the growth of long years ; and in many hearts, a jealousy on behalf of doctrine (highly laudable, if it stood not alone) has taken the place of the devotedness of heart and life, which an earnest longing for the return of the Lord Jesus both *promotes* and *implies*. True it is, that the sincere child of God will at all times feel the deep necessity of being made like unto his Saviour ; but if, in teaching this necessity, reliance is placed mainly upon a way of man's devising,—a clear view and a strong attachment to the scheme of the Gospel,—instead of the way of Christ's appointing,—that is, watchfulness for his return, let not the shepherds of Christ's flock upon earth wonder if they see very many embracing with all willingness *the scheme*, but not conforming their hearts,—their tempers,—their lives,—*to the image of Christ*.

Let me, then, once more place clearly before you the fact alluded to in the text.

The hour will come, when Time shall be no longer ; when the great and dreadful day of the Lord will have come to its close, in which the wicked, unable to stand in the judgment, have

been cast into the lake of fire, there to be shut up for ever and ever! Where is, then, the Church of Christ? Will Christ have ceased to be their King? Having completed the redemption and final salvation of all those who shall be saved, will he cease to be Christ?—put off his humanity, and return to his throne in the heavens, to be only, as before his incarnation, the second Person in the ever-blessed Trinity? No, assuredly; he has taken upon him our flesh, and in that flesh he shall eternally be, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” The idea, then, of eternal blessedness, associated in the minds of most Christians with “heaven,” is, when translated into Scripture language, “*the perpetual abode of the Church with Christ.*” “So shall we ever be with the Lord.”

The place of the abode,—the manner of it,—the employment in it,—may all be facts on which we may differ, according as we connect in a different manner the analogies of *things seen* and *things revealed*; but on the fact itself there should be but one feeling; that the continual presence of Christ with his Church is revealed in God’s Word, as the *essential* ingredient in the future blessedness of the Church; and every idea of eternal glory that does not embrace this should be rejected at once.

Before proceeding to the practical bearing of

this subject upon our faith and patience now, I may be permitted to dwell for a few moments on the support that these views gain from sources, other than the direct evidence of Scripture. These, which would have no force if standing opposed to it, may be regarded as powerful auxiliaries, since they coincide with it.

I. The belief in the resurrection of the body, regarded in its full force, seems to intimate, that eternal blessedness shall be bodily, and not spiritual only. The suffering patriarch, Job, rejoices in the belief, that "in his flesh he shall see God." (Job xix. 26.) David "will be satisfied," when he awakes with the likeness of Christ, but not till then. (Ps. xvii. 15.) The waiting believer, though it doth not yet appear what he shall be, yet rests in this assurance, "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John iii. 2.) The departed Christian waits for his resurrection, as the completion of his happiness; the inspired pages utter scarcely one word concerning his state as a disembodied spirit; all the promises to him wait for their fulfilment until the *rising* saint joins the *risen* Saviour. Forcibly, then, does this strengthen the expectation of a bodily blessedness, for the perfection of which the bodily presence of Christ with his people seems *indispensable*.

Again, from the analogy of the *past* we may draw conclusions for the *future*. View the world as it came out from the hands of its great Architect; holy and pure, the race of man upon the earth was intended to be a seed to serve God; this is a purpose unaccomplished as yet, but which all the working together of His ways,—all that is told us of His eternal counsels,—leads us to believe shall yet be accomplished. If not, then has the malice of Satan frustrated the purpose of God.

This cannot be; and pursuing the chain of events, we mark this purpose of God, suspended for awhile, till the stupendous plan of love and mercy has been fully accomplished in the work of man's salvation. Adam was the first of the seed that should have been a godly seed; Satan came in, and, for a time, spoiled the good work of God; Christ came down,—reconciled God to the world,—and, by his all-prevailing atonement, snatches one and another of the apostate race of men from the grasp of the destroyer—seals them for his own—though they die, He has their souls in safe keeping,—and reserves them as a part of the seed which shall serve God, when the victory over sin and Satan is achieved. The day of victory comes at length; the Lord returns to the overthrow of all his enemies; to judge and cast down to hell all unpardoned sinners; to seal

his triumph over Satan and his angels, by joining them in the same judgment and the same punishment. What is the link now wanting in this chain? Is it not *the restoration upon the earth* of a godly seed, that shall eternally fulfil the first purpose of God in the creation of the world? If otherwise, what shall we say of this earth, on which Christ has achieved his great victory? Shall it be destroyed, and be no more? No; this would be to blot from the face of creation the scene of the glorious triumph of Christ over sin. The earth shall no more be *utterly* destroyed by that flood of fire, than it was by the flood of water. What then? Shall it become, as some have foolishly supposed, the place of torment itself? There is not a syllable in God's Word to countenance such an idea. Rather is it, indeed, necessary, to complete the chain of events,—to carry out the original purpose of God,—that this earth shall be the perpetual abode of the Church with Christ; without this, the victory would seem but half complete; Satan, though perishing in the contest, would seem to have driven the victorious Redeemer *from his own battle-field*.

Now, regarded in this light, there is nothing extravagant in the idea, that "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," shall be the eternal dwelling-place of the

Church; but rather does it seem to fulfil more entirely the predictions of the vision which appeared to the Apostle St. John, and which is recorded in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation. For when that vision has revealed the Holy City, New Jerusalem, *coming down* from God out of heaven, *to the earth*, what says the heavenly voice? Let its answer seal to us this view of the truth, while it closes our argument respecting it: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men; and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God." (Rev. xxi. 3.)

Here let us rest, dear brethren, from disquisition, and pass on very briefly to notice

II. THE BEARING OF THE PROMISE OF THE TEXT UPON OUR FAITH AND PATIENCE NOW.

God forbid that any of us should take up this or any other matter revealed in the Bible, in a merely speculative way. Divine knowledge is the best knowledge, if used aright; but it bears with it into the soul that receives it, the weight of a *terrible responsibility*. To him who receives it and neglects it, the righteous Judge shall say, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow; wherefore

then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming, I might have received mine own with usury." (Luke xix. 22, 23.)

O all ye, who are in these days well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, tremble while you hear these words, and take good heed, that you lay not up divine knowledge in your bosoms like the talent laid up in a napkin! It is no neutral possession,—it is no harmless charge—*it is the candle of the Lord*;—put it in the candlestick, and then live and walk by its light, and it shall guide you unto the light of that eternal day, where they need no candle, neither light of the sun; but put it under the bed, and it shall serve but to kindle beneath you the fire of the Lord's anger, which shall burn unto the lowest hell!

But, although sounding this solemn note of warning, "brethren, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Many there are amongst you, I feel assured, who study God's word, and especially the prophecies contained therein, not that you may add merely to your stock of knowledge—not that you may boast of it as an acquirement—not that you may make it a topic of conversation in your circle,—but that you may be prepared for the coming of the Lord, that draweth nigh; and may be diligent that you

Church; but rather does it seem to fulfil more entirely the predictions of the vision which appeared to the Apostle St. John, and which is recorded in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation. For when that vision has revealed the Holy City, New Jerusalem, *coming down* from God out of heaven, *to the earth*, what says the heavenly voice? Let its answer seal to us this view of the truth, while it closes our argument respecting it: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men; and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God." (Rev. xxi. 3.)

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the headstone shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it!

II. These words remind us of the duty of WATCHFULNESS. Without this, there can hardly be a readiness for Christ. If we watch not, we slumber and sleep; and if we sleep our lamps will go out. "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments." Remissness here will do us damage, that no after repentance will repair. If the climax of our hope be, to be ever with the Lord, O let us remember, our happiness *with* Him, nay, our admission *to* Him, depends upon our preparedness *for* Him at His coming. If after the doors are shut, we shall come, crying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," vainly shall we plead the many high privileges we once enjoyed; even though we have eaten and drunk in His presence, and He has taught in our streets, He *will know us not*! O then, if you would not vainly plead His teaching *then*, hear it *now*; "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

III. The same words strongly urge us to *heavenly-mindedness*. Can we hear that we shall be *ever* with the Lord, and forget to reflect how short, how fleeting are the interests of time? Who can measure their duration now? Who can sum up their small value? If the Lord is indeed at

hand, then a few years' purchase is the total worth of any earthly joy!

"Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Measure that "little while" against "ever with the Lord," and thence deduce the true value of things *visible* and things *invisible*. Surely, the preceptive teaching of these words is this: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Col. iii. 2, 4.)

IV. Lastly, the very sum of these words is, "eternal joy." "So shall we ever be with the Lord." O why should the poor efforts of a mortal tongue be expended in endeavours to describe their full meaning? It surpasses the ablest effort of the most powerful mind,—it mocks the labours of the poet,—it contemns the best skill of the painter,—it paralyzes the tongue of the learned,—it soars above the loftiest ideas of the eloquent—it even disappoints the purest imaginings of the spiritual mind; why then multiply words in a matter in which description is hopeless?

But *this we know*, for God has told it us; we have His promise sure, and to that promise let us

cling, "*We shall be ever with the Lord.*" If we have found on earth our best joys in communion with our ascended Saviour, then, O how shall eternity bring us the full fruition of that foretaste ! If the few short moments on earth have been joyful moments, what shall be the *eternal* joy ? If the glory has beamed upon us, through all the clouds of this dark world, what shall be the blaze of glory, when the veil is rent for ever away ? If we have rejoiced to see Him through the glass, darkly, what shall the joy be, when we see him face to face ? We know not now, but we shall know hereafter ; and the glad anticipation of that knowledge now, will quicken our diligence, our watchfulness, our heavenly-mindedness.

For the day that is at hand, shall at length arise, —a morning without clouds,—a sun that shall no more go down ; the opening out of all that we have long known and loved in promise and in hope. Many years shall indeed elapse, from the day of that second coming, until the hour, when Time shall be no longer ; many events shall indeed take place upon the earth, ere it becomes the final abode of the Church with Christ ; but the word of promise stands there unchangeably true ; *when once the Saviour returns again to his people, he returns to depart from them no more for ever* ; but as the great Captain of their salvation, He shall

carry them on from strength to strength, from victory to victory, until with the final overthrow of sin and Satan and Death, there opens upon us, the eternal Sabbath—"AND SO SHALL WE EVER BE WITH THE LORD."

NOTES.

NOTE A.

OF forty-two passages in which the word, *πάντοτε*, occurs in the New Testament, there is not one passage, except this, and that in Hebrews vii. 25, in which it is possible to render the word in the eternal sense. Seldom is the word translated "ever;" and in the few instances beyond the above, (Luke xv. 31; John vi. 34; xviii. 20; 1 Thess. v. 15, 16; 2 Tim. iii. 7,) it will not bear for a moment the sense of perpetuity. The more usual rendering, "always," conveys the sense far better, which, in fact, is "continually"—"at all times."

I have, in the pages of the sermon, given the reason for which in the passage in Hebrews vii. 25, it would be incorrect to attach the idea of eternity to the word *πάντοτε*. Therefore this passage stands alone, if we regard the word here as to be taken in the sense of perpetuity.

Plainly, therefore, we should do violence to every rule of criticism, were we to rely upon such an interpretation. Yet the eternal abode of the Church with Christ is a truth so abundantly revealed in the other passages of Scripture brought forward, that to separate in idea the continuity and the

eternity of the abode of the Church with Christ seems unnecessary and unwise.

In the strict interpretation of this particular passage, however, I have no doubt that we should dwell rather upon the *unbroken abiding*, than on the *eternal abode* of the Church with its Redeemer.

NOTE B.

It seems desirable to mingle as little as possible of controversy in a subject which, rightly received, tends so directly to practical holiness; and, therefore, I have carefully avoided introducing in the sermon, and explaining passages of Scripture which might seem to bear against the interpretation there advocated: not that I deem the views there advanced weak in scriptural support, but because such a course tends rather to confuse than to profit the mind either of the hearer or the reader.

But there is one passage to which, I shall probably be pardoned, if I advert in this note, because, being well known, and frequently brought before our minds and memories, it might suggest doubts and difficulties, were it suffered to remain unreconciled with the view in question. The passage I allude to is found in 1 Cor. xv. 24—28, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, that did put all things under him. And

when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Now, the whole context plainly shows that the kingdom here spoken of is the Mediatorial kingdom, in which Jesus our Lord now reigns, and in which he will reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. This kingdom he shall deliver up to God the Father, when his final triumph over the powers of death and hell leaves him none to subdue—no authority or power to bring down. This does not, however, by any means imply that Christ shall altogether cease to reign. The many passages of Scripture that assert, without any ambiguity of language, that His kingdom shall endure for ever, oblige us to take this single passage in the limited sense I have given above.

Should this view be deemed by any inconclusive and unsatisfactory, let it be remembered, it is a difficulty that is experienced by all orthodox interpreters of Scripture, and not by those merely who hold the views advocated in these sermons.

If the assertion of these words admits of no modification, no application to Christ in his character as Mediator only, then they would prove far too much, namely, that Christ, the co-equal, co-eternal Son of God, ceased henceforth to be so, and became subject to the Father in nature as well as in office. But no such unnatural and forced construction need be put upon the words. It is well that we should always remember the caution given in our Twentieth Article, applicable as much to individuals as to the Church at large, "that we may not so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another."

If then we find, as we do, many passages of holy Scripture

which declare the throne of Christ to be for ever and ever, and we find this one, which seems to say that the time shall come when he shall deliver up the kingdom, and become subject to God his Father, we are bound not to set these passages at variance with one another, but so to unite them, that we may from their union bring forth the compound truth, reconcileable alike with both. How may this be done in the present instance? The fact of Christ's ceasing to have a kingdom, is irreconcilable with those passages which assert that His throne is eternal. Therefore, the assertion that His kingdom shall altogether cease, is inadmissible. But it is quite reconcileable with both, that Christ should give up his kingdom which he held as Mediator, and retain that which He has won in right of his victory over sin, and death, and hell. These kingdoms are wholly distinct, although the subjects in both are in a great measure the same. Distinct in time—for not until the Mediatorial kingdom closes does the kingdom of glory open; distinct in character—for the one is militant, while the other is triumphant; distinct in privilege—for in the one God is to be approached only through the Mediator, while in the other, God himself tabernacles with men, and without a Mediator, is with them, and is their God. We therefore need have no difficulty in applying the passage in the Corinthians to the Mediatorial kingdom alone, and concluding that it leaves untouched the many passages which foretel a kingdom of glory, in which Christ shall reign with his saints for ever and ever.

LECTURE VIII.

THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF TIMES AND SEASONS.

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1 THESS. V. 1, 2.

*“ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have
no need that I write unto you. For yourselves
know perfectly that the day of the Lord so
cometh as a thief in the night.”*

It is the glorious prerogative of God only, that all His works are known unto Him from the beginning. His foreknowledge, like His power, is infinite and unsearchable. The course of all nature ; and the thoughts, the plans, and counsels of all His creatures, both fallen and unfallen, with their most distant results, lie open before Him.

Even the blessed angels, however great may be their knowledge of the past, depend for their insight into the future on His sovereign pleasure, and "desire to look into" His holy prophecies, that they may obtain a clearer understanding of the glory to be hereafter revealed.

If such be the state of the holy angels, who dwell in God's presence, how much deeper is the ignorance of fallen man! He has lost the power of holding intercourse with God. He is now a condemned criminal, blind to the future, with nothing certain before him but the darkness of the grave. There is the veil of a thick covering spread over the face of all nations, and only the light of God's word can rend it asunder. Along with his original righteousness, all true insight into the future has passed away. The deep instinct and longing is all that has survived, and even this has been turned by the tempter into a fresh snare, to sink him deeper into ruin. Hence arose the lying oracles by which the worship of devils was promoted in the heathen world; and those accursed arts of sorcery, which God has so severely denounced in His word. "There shall not be among you one that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a necromancer; for all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord thy God; and because of these abominations

the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee."

But while these wicked attempts to gain forbidden knowledge are denounced so sternly, the same voice opens a wide door of lawful hope to the people of God. This longing for a knowledge of things to come is not to be stifled, but to be purified and redeemed. It is one form of the yearning of man's spirit after the lost image of his Maker, and the word of prophecy is the means of its redemption. Hence the voice which condemns the sorcerers and observers of times utters at once the gracious promise, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." And thus, in our blessed Lord, the prophet like unto Moses, the Church is really to obtain that knowledge which the observers of times, by sorceries and wicked arts, endeavoured in vain to procure. In such measure and degree as His wisdom sees to be most profitable, the Wonderful Numberer himself reveals them to His faithful servants. And thus, from the days of Noah and the hundred and twenty years' reprieve of judgment, down to the latest visions in Patmos to the beloved John, revealed times and seasons have formed one main element in the prophecies of God. The command of our Lord, to search the

Scriptures, must include within it, therefore, a distinct charge to all his true followers, that they should search the meaning of these prophetic times which God himself has revealed.

But here there is peculiar need of a holy caution, and of the Spirit of wisdom from above. The great body of the Church, in every age, have sinned by a profane and reckless unconcern about the divine prophecies. They have freely indulged their own worldly conjectures about the future, while the most cautious and humble search into the times and seasons revealed in God's word has been derided with scorn. Some, however, have fallen into an opposite error. They have striven for mastery over the thick darkness of the future, but they have not striven lawfully. They have neglected the clear tokens of God's will, that future events should be only partially and slowly unveiled, even to His own children. They have sought, by keen inquiry, to roll away the smoke from the temple of God, before the time which He had appointed, and when the cloud served for a token of His own presence and glory. The laws of moral evidence have been reversed. Confident assertions have been reared upon false or doubtful premises; and rash conjectures, soon refuted by time, have confirmed the ungodliness of worldly Christians. A short season of feverish excite-

ment has thus often been followed by an apathy and slumber deeper than before.

Amidst these opposite dangers, the subject acquires daily a more urgent interest. The signs of these times, in the Church and in the world, call us loudly to inquire with the holy prophet—O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? A knowledge of revealed times and seasons will be a powerful stay to the Church in the hour of trial. May the Holy Spirit enlighten us, while we consider, first, its growing importance; secondly, the examples of its attainment in past ages; thirdly, the objections which may be raised against such inquiries; and finally, the degrees and measures in which this knowledge is bestowed. We may then apply the whole to our duty, as Christians, in the present day.

I. First, a right knowledge of the times and seasons is of great and growing importance to the Church of God.

Here the words of our text may seem, perhaps, to make against us. If St. Paul thought it needless to write to the Thessalonians on this subject, and not one date occurs in all his Epistles, how can such knowledge be really important for ourselves?

The following words of the Epistle will supply an answer. The true purpose of all Divine truth is to quicken the spiritual affections and confirm the faith of the children of God. By this rule the great house-

holder measures out His gifts of knowledge, and suits them, in all wisdom, to the wants of His people. There is an early stage of experience, both in the Christian and the whole Church, when the knowledge of times might prove hurtful, rather than helpful, to their advance in holiness. If their faith be deep and simple; if their hopes are bright and glowing, undisturbed by doubts and temptations, and rest with earnest desire on the person of the Saviour, and the promise of His coming; speculation about times, though lawful in itself, might prove a distraction and a hindrance. Doubts and scruples and questions might be needlessly raised; and the pure flow of the affections be checked and damped, if not entirely destroyed. But when conflicts and temptations have already begun, a fresh armoury is needed to overcome them, and knowledge of the times becomes a bulwark of the soul.

Such was the first state of the Thessalonians. Their knowledge might be small, but their zeal was fervent. They had lately turned to the living God from idols; and the grace and love of the Saviour was ever before their eyes, and filled them with earnest desire for His appearing. Every other object was overlooked, and their hopes were fixed simply on the coming of the Lord. The Apostle wisely forbore to distract their minds with needless doubts about the interval of delay; till

their infant graces were grown strong to resist temptation, and their patience become ripe to endure the agony and sickness of heart from a hope long deferred. Their actual state he describes himself, "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all children of the light, and of the day; ye are not of the night, nor of the darkness."

Such even now may be the first condition of a true penitent when he awakens from the dream of worldliness. While the flame is newly kindled, and burns brightly, it were unwise to distract his soul at once with inquiries into the deep things of God. The sincere milk of the word, and not strong meat, must then be set before him, to ensure his rapid growth in true holiness.

But such a state, whether in the Church or the Christian, like the freedom and joy of early childhood, did not in the early times, and never does, continue long. Ignorance, sooner or later, will open the door for temptation. The Christian hope will then be changed for a feverish excitement and alarm, or droop and die away into a heedless slumber. The Thessalonians are themselves a remarkable proof. Only a few months had passed when their ignorance of the times let in temptations, fatal to their spiritual discernment and real peace. They were shaken out of their mind and troubled. The Apostle now meets the evil by a partial

glimpse of those truths which before he had passed in silence. "Let no man," he says, "deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come the falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed *in his time*." Thus he opens to them the first glimpse of that economy of times and seasons, which lay couched for their use in the earlier prophecies; and by one extract, however short, from this code of Divine wisdom, fortifies and secures their minds against the new danger which assailed them.

Here then, my brethren, the Holy Spirit provides a test, by which to discern whether a knowledge of the times be needful for ourselves. Are you, like the Thessalonians when St. Paul first wrote to them, full of faith and abounding in charity? Is your love so fervent, and your hope of the Lord's return so deep and earnest, that it lifts you at once above all the changes of time, and fixes your thoughts, without distraction or fear, on the glory then to be revealed? Does the thought of its nearness never once trouble your minds,

nor distract them from the quiet diligence of appointed duty ; and no suspicion of its possible remoteness, in some distant generation, lead you to relax your earnest hope, or to cease from listening for the sound of His chariot wheels? If you have truly reached this high state, then are you blessed indeed, thrice blessed of the Lord ! While this sunshine of His grace continues, you need not be troubled to hear of times and seasons, though the inspired Apostle himself were the messenger to reveal them.

But such, my brethren, with few, very few exceptions, is not now, and never has been, the state of the Church. The wise virgins, as well as the foolish, have been wrapped in a deepening slumber. From age to age, some few, or even many, have been the prey of a dangerous excitement, followed by a relapse, no less dangerous, when the season of false hope was gone by. But the great body, except in one or two grand epidemics of alarm, have been at all times in a deep sleep, like the sleep of death. The temptations on either side have been gaining in strength. The fact, that we are now 1,800 years nearer the Advent than when St. Paul wrote, must in times of alarm render the fever more intense, and the excitement more dangerous, than with the Thesalonians. On the other hand, the fact that sixty

generations have passed since such warnings were first given, supplies a pretext for indifference, which grows more plausible in each age than in the last, to those Christians who are lying down and loving to slumber. No remedy can be found for these opposite evils, but a growing knowledge of the times which God has revealed for our guidance. A view of the calm and stedfast course of Providence in past ages, and its fulfilled intervals of patient delay, will free us from the snare of the Thessalonian Church. We shall not then suffer uncertain conjectures, centred on some one moment of time, to exert that influence which is due only to the broad and solemn reality of eternal judgment. But the same insight into the past course of God's Providence will reveal to us clearly the sure approach of the great day of the Lord. We shall no longer fancy it, as worldly men do in their secret thoughts, a rainbow dream, that flits away from us as we advance in the stream of time. We shall see it, as the storm-tost mariner sees the distant headlands; a land of promise, whose place is fixed in the charts of heaven, though our eyes may sometimes deceive us in its distance; and shall feel certain that every day is bringing us nearer to the glorious haven, and is hastening us to the close of the mystery of

God. And now that the voyage of the Church has lasted so long, the dimness is beginning to clear from the horizon, and we may see plainly that we are rapidly nearing the shore; that we are living in the last days, and the glory of the Lord will soon be revealed. Every day, therefore, it becomes more needful for the Church to discern the times and the seasons, if she would escape the threatening dangers on the right hand and on the left, and be prepared, as a chaste virgin, for the coming of her Lord.

II. But here the question may arise, However useful such knowledge might be, is it not entirely beyond our reach? Has not the Father reserved the times in His own power? Is not the history of all such researches a catalogue of rash and groundless conjectures, soon refuted by time?

To answer this doubt, let us consult the record of past ages in the Word of God. There we learn that such knowledge has been revealed, though sparingly, from the earliest ages, and has served for the practical guidance of the people of God.

In the old world the light of Divine truth shone very dimly. The hope of redemption was only like moonlight in the thick darkness. Yet even then, this knowledge was not wholly denied. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, with

holy solemnity, of the coming of the Lord, to the scoffers of his own generation. And as the flood, an awful type of the last judgment, drew nearer, Noah had the season of forbearance plainly revealed. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." No announcement of time could be more clear and simple. Warned by this voice of God, and its attendant threatenings, Noah, "moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house." He thus learned to possess his soul in patience amidst the scorning of the proud, till the last sands of this hour-glass of heaven were run out, and the flood came on the world of the ungodly.

The next main era of trial was the captivity of Egypt. Here the time was doubly revealed, in years and generations, "Know of a surety," the Lord said to Abraham, "that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." This message of God was forgotten by the great body of the people, whose eyes went after the idols of Egypt. But in the heart of Moses it was deeply treasured, and made him willing to suffer with the people of God, and eager to effect their deliverance. He was himself in the fourth generation from the patriarch Levi,

and knew that nearly four centuries had passed from the call and sojourning of Abraham, at the time when he slew the Egyptian, and sought to deliver his brethren. True, even Moses, like many Christians, antedated the time of mercy, and forty years were to be spent in lonely exile before the season of redemption was come. But still his faith in that promise to Abraham had a blessed reward. "That same Moses, whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush." They who despised the prediction of times and seasons, were unprepared when the mercy came, and perished in the wilderness. He who laid it up in his heart, and erred only in the eagerness of hope and desire, was tried with a season of delay; but he obtained the fulness of the blessing, and became the ruler and deliverer of the people of God.

The sojourn in the wilderness was the next period of temptation. Once more the time was plainly foretold, that the faith of the servants of God might not sink under the delay. "Ye shall wander," it was said, "in the wilderness forty years." It might still be doubtful whether the period began from the Exodus itself, or from the date of the threatening. But still, in the fortieth year, when

Aaron died, no one who believed that message could doubt that the deliverance was close at hand; and their faith and courage would thus be strengthened for the warfare. "All these things," as St. Paul tells us, "happened unto them as types;" for the Christian Church was also to abide long in the wilderness; "and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the latter times of the world are come."

While open miracles were wrought under the judges, and during the glory of David and Solomon, no distinct times were revealed; but when the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were sinking into ruin, this Divine light was vouchsafed again to the Church. When Ahaz was in deepest alarm, and "the heart of his people was moved, as the trees of the wood are moved by the wind," a prophecy of numbered years was given once more, to quiet the fears of God's people. Judgment on Israel and mercy to Judah were proclaimed in the same message, "Within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be no more a people." After a pause of seven centuries, this prediction of times was made the preface to that glorious prophecy which announced the birth of Immanuel, and the wonderful mystery of our Saviour's birth, the Son of the virgin, God manifest in the flesh.

The captivity of Judah soon followed. This time of sorrow had also its bounds assigned in a twice-repeated prophecy, "The whole land shall be a desolation and astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." And again, "After seventy years are accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word to you, in causing you to return to this place." The precise date might be obscure till the period was near its close, for there were three events from which it might begin, and two of them were actually marked, after seventy years, by a signal deliverance. But still the time itself was clear, and the promise well suited to sustain the faith of the exiles in those years of sorrow.

The prophecy also was not given to be buried in neglect until after its fulfilment. The holy Daniel, the wisest of men, knew better its gracious design. Two years before its earlier close, he "understood by reckoning the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." His search into this unfulfilled prediction of times and seasons, first gave light to his mind, and then stirred him up to deep confession and earnest prayer. Man might denounce it as presumption, or despise it as folly; but God

rewarded it by the visit of an angel, and the gift of a new prophecy, which has been one main bulwark of the Christian faith in every succeeding age.

In this vision of Gabriel, and the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, the series of revealed times is continued to the First Advent of our Lord. Whatever doubts might rest on their exact termination, they served to guide and animate the hopes of the Jewish believers. Simeon and Anna, when our Lord was born, were resting on this prophecy, and waiting for the consolation of Israel. As the faith of Daniel in the words of Jeremiah, so too that of holy Simeon in the prediction of Daniel, was rewarded with further light; and "it was revealed to him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Messiah." And thus his faith in times still unfulfilled, awoke that song of praise which the Church repeats ever in her solemn worship down to the present day. If we despise or denounce a humble search into the dates of prophecy, our own lips bear witness against us, every time that we borrow those words of deep and holy thanksgiving.

Finally, the words of our Lord which announced the fall and ruin of the temple within one generation, were the safety of the early disciples in the hour of danger, and ensured their

deliverance when Jerusalem was overthrown. And thus, from first to last, definite intervals have been revealed to the Church, whether for grace or judgment; and a prayerful, humble search into their meaning, before their fulfilment, has ever brought with it increase of light, and the assurance of a blessing.

III. But here doubts and difficulties may arise, and have led many Christians to neglect the lesson which these various examples lend for our guidance. Let us examine the most usual or the most important of these, and we shall find them to be shadowy and vain; and that the duty of seeking insight into the seasons God has revealed, will only stand out in fuller and brighter relief.

First, we are often reminded that "secret things belong unto the Lord our God." And, doubtless, even in searching God's holy prophecies, the spirit of that caution may be transgressed, by a vain curiosity and irreverent boldness. But when the words are perverted into an absolute prohibition, the rest of the verse supplies a conclusive answer. "The things that are revealed belong to us and our children." Surely every part of God's word is a revelation. To number it among the secret things which are best honoured by neglect, is really to fling back the Divine gift in the face of Him who bestows

it. He declares solemnly that all inspired Scripture is profitable for us, and that whatever is written therein is written for our learning. Who are we, that we should pretend to be wiser than God, or profess that some of His revealed sayings would have been more wisely kept back from us? as if our neglect were to remedy the unwise loquacity of the Spirit of God.

The words of our Lord to his apostles have given rise to another scruple, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." These, however, when searched narrowly, are a strong warrant for an inquiry into the times and seasons of prophecy, while they suggest a needful caution for its due exercise. The words are not general, as our version seems to imply, but special, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons that the Father hath reserved in his power." There is here a direct allusion to a text familiar to the apostles, and which explains the true meaning of the answer. Daniel (chap. xii.) had heard the two angels put to the inquiry, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The Son of God replies, with a solemn oath, that "it shall be for a season, and seasons, and half a season; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished."

The prophet then asks for further light, but receives the answer—"The words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."

The answer, then, of our Lord to his apostles on earth, is only the echo of his reply to the prophet in vision. The event spoken of is clearly the same—the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, and the end of the scattering of the holy people. The seasons of delay before that event were sealed till the time of the end; until then, the Father, by the lips of the covenant angel, had expressly reserved them in His own power. The disciples asked the *time* of that restoration. Our Lord, as if pointing them to the words in Daniel, introduces the very term employed in the vision, "It is not for you to know the times *or the seasons*, which the Father hath put in his own power." As if he had said, The time of which you speak follows certain seasons of predicted delay; and those seasons have been reserved at present from a complete revelation, until the Father himself, at the time of the end, shall begin to unseal them.

We have thus a threefold and fourfold answer to the objection. First, the words are not general as to all times, but refer specially to the three times and a half which were to be sealed and closed until a later period. Secondly, they are not

general as to Christians, but relate, with a marked emphasis, to the apostles themselves, and Christians in their day. 'Such knowledge,' our Lord implies, 'may be hereafter given to others, but it is not for you. Another work is assigned you,—to found the Church and spread the Gospel through the world. It is only when the faith of the Gentiles begins to decay, that the Father will unseal the times of that blessed hope, which shall be as life from the dead to the unbelieving world.' And hence, further, they are a secret assurance that there will be other Christians of a later age, to whom these times will be unsealed, as those of Jeremiah were to Daniel himself, shortly before their close. Finally, there were other times not reserved, which the apostles themselves might know, as the fall of Jerusalem and of the temple in their own generation.

But this leads us to the words of Christ in the prophecy on the mount, which are often viewed as a clear censure on all these inquiries: "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." How far the spirit of this caution extends may require much spiritual wisdom to determine; but the conclusions loosely and rashly drawn from it have nothing to sustain them. First, the assertion is strictly true, only of

the time when our Saviour spoke; for, surely, with regard to the Son of God, they must have ceased to be true when he was risen and ascended into glory. Our Lord himself, since they were uttered, has received in his human nature immeasurable wisdom; and we may infer that his Church also, though in measures infinitely short of his own, will receive from age to age a like increase. Again, the words refer to the day and hour, but not to the year, much less to the generation in which that great event will occur. Minute conjectures on the time of the Advent may perhaps still be forbidden us, and the spirit of the caution extend itself beyond the strict letter. But still the spirit of the previous verse has a voice not less plain, and speaks with the same authority. The first generation of the Church there is made a precedent for the last; and leads us to expect that Christians, whenever that generation has come, will be able to ascertain it, and may know by clear signs that the Lord is really near at hand.

Again, it is alleged by some Christians that no materials really exist for that search into the times, which so many examples appear to warrant. They suppose that the Church has been left, more than two thousand years, without any such period being revealed, which might mark out the distance or

nearness of the end. Surely it would be strange if a light, vouchsafed to the Church from the first building of the ark to the fall of Jerusalem and flight to Pella, had suddenly ceased under the nobler and clearer dispensation of the Gospel. And when all resort to observers of times is strictly forbidden, because the Prophet like unto Moses was to appear, it were still more marvellous if the coming of that great Prophet were to be the very signal for withholding all knowledge of times from the Church of God. But, in fact, while only about seven distinct periods were revealed in prophecy from the Creation to the birth of our Lord, there are at least twice the number which clearly relate to times after the first Advent. The Church of the New Testament, therefore, instead of being condemned to a total darkness, has been favoured with a double portion of light, and more abundant revelations; though, for the fuller exercise of her faith and wisdom, the seasons have now been set before her in a more mysterious form, and greater care is needful to decipher their true meaning.

One last prejudice remains, the most suited for popular use; and yet, when viewed practically, the most deceptive. All inquiry into prophetic times, it is often said, is fruitless and unprofitable. Failure after failure has occurred in the most con-

fident anticipations, till the melancholy series of errors and disappointments should warn us from entering on so barren a field.

This caution and censure, within certain limits, is just; beyond those limits, it is presumptuous and wicked. When we venture to fix the month or the day of coming events, or confidently assign even the exact year, especially of that Advent which was once hidden from the Son of Man, and is still wrapped in a mysterious veil; we slight the lessons of experience, and run counter to the spirit and scope of those words of Christ on Mount Olives. On the other hand, to ascertain our true place in the decrees of Providence, and the prophetic features of the generation in which we live; nay, even conjectures, offered with caution and humility, on the year when revealed numbers may expire, are justified by the examples of Scripture, and encouraged and commended by the Spirit of God. If Daniel had been guilty of sin when he reckoned up the years from Jeremiah's prediction, and found that two only remained, he would never have been recompensed for his presumptuous error by the visit of Gabriel, and the revelation of another prophecy still more glorious. To condemn the inquiry, within these limits, is really to annul the command of Christ—Search the Scriptures,—and contradicts the plain voice of the Spirit

of God. The prophets themselves, we are told, inquired and searched diligently what time, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify. The blessed angels no less desire to look into these things, and are seen in successive visions applying for light and knowledge to the Son of God. With such examples, of saints upon earth, and angels in heaven, we may well scorn the ridicule of the scorner, and tread underfoot the vain censures of ignorant and faithless Christians.

For, in truth, these inquiries, when pursued in humility, have never been really fruitless. Their true object is not to construct for us beforehand an exact chronology of coming ages; though not a few modest conjectures on the very year of coming events, drawn from the prophecies, have been strikingly fulfilled. But such a test of their worth is miserably false and deceptive. The great use of these revealed times is to shield Christians from two opposite evils; a blind and impatient hope, such as would fever and disturb the soul; and a deadly and fatal slumber, which removes the coming of the Lord into the far distance, and folds its hands in contented worldliness. Whenever these times have been searched into with humility and prayer, both dangers have been averted. The exact season of the end, it is true, may have been

often antedated, and distant events foreshortened in the prospect; but still the practical benefits were secured. The faithful have neither been shaken in mind and troubled by a feverish and impatient hope, that overlooks the calm progress of God's counsels; nor yet have been suffered to say in their hearts, with the evil servant, "My Lord delayeth his coming." By these prophetic seasons, and by these only, the balance has been restored between opposite graces, the patient waiting for Christ, and earnest and assured hope in the approach of his blessed kingdom.

IV. Let us now inquire, finally, the degrees and measures in which this knowledge of the times is bestowed, and may reasonably be expected by the Church. And here there are a few general maxims, which seem to be clearly set before us in the word of God.

First, the knowledge of which we now speak must remain ever hidden from the unbelieving and worldly. "None of the wicked shall understand." In their case, even to the last, the vision of all the prophets remains as the words of a book that is sealed. These deeper things of God are set forth in a such a manner, that only by a patient and believing search can we attain their real meaning. Unconverted and curious men may doubtless receive on trust the conclusions of others; but

only as a fashionable creed, which, at the first change of the fashion, is soon cast aside. Such a spurious graft can never flourish on a worldly heart. For these times are revealed in connexion with the deepest views of God's Providence, with solemn warnings of judgment, and mysteries of human sin and Divine forbearance, which only spiritual minds can understand. Hence the Holy Spirit here warns us, that worldly men, even to the last, will walk in darkness; and in the time when they are saying, Peace and safety, the times of delay will be gone, and sudden destruction overtake them as a thief in the night.

Again, such knowledge can only be gained, even by true Christians, when sought with humble prayer and devout reverence. It was in answer to such prayers that most of these times were announced at first; and only such petitions as obtained the messages themselves, can remove the Divine seal which has rested on them for ages. The two last visions of Daniel, in which these numbers chiefly occur, were given each in the hour of his deepest confession; and the numbers in the Apocalypse, as well as the visions that contain them, were given to the beloved John, after reverent prostration, weeping, and tears. It is the meek, and the meek only, whom God will guide in judgment, and to whom he will teach his

way. When even pious Christians, learned or unlearned, begin to quarrel with God's prophecies, instead of searching them with reverence; their learning will become folly, their strength, like Samson's, will pass from them, and they will be left, like the worldling, to stumble in thick darkness.

Thirdly, the measure of light vouchsafed to the Church, and attainable by each Christian, increases from age to age. Under the Old Testament, one period after another was revealed; and the true limits of each, in its turn, became clear as its end was approaching. It was near the close of the Egyptian captivity that Moses began to discern the time; and near the end of the captivity at Babylon that Daniel understood, by reckonings, the number of the years. It was when the predicted weeks had almost run out that Simeon was waiting for Messiah, and had the promise given that he should see the Lord's Christ. The same principle is true also under the Gospel. The prophetic times have been revealed from the first; but the Divine seal, placed on many of them, was to be slowly removed. Every century, as it rolled on, lessened the motives for concealment, and increased the need of a partial unveiling of them, to sustain and guide the hopes of the Church. The declarations that the end was near would

afterwards have become a snare to the faith of Christians, as they have been to Infidels, unless it were shewn that the delay also was predicted, and a limit assigned for its continuance in the word of God itself. And surely if, in those first ages, the ignorance of the Church was a strong motive for watchfulness, when the end is really near and within one generation, an assured knowledge of its nearness will be a motive still more powerful, and one which the Lord will not withhold from his faithful people.

This promise, indeed, of growing light, is repeatedly given, and in various forms. It is in the time of the end that many are to run to and fro, and knowledge of the word of prophecy is to be increased. "In the eventide" of the Gospel dispensation "there will be light." Although the wicked remain in darkness to the last, "the wise shall understand." When the eastern empire of Rome has fallen under the scourge of the second woe, and the light of the Reformation dawns on the visible Church of the west and its demon-worshippers, the open book of prophecy is to be read once more, and digested more deeply by the faithful. Finally, in the times of the last vial the cloud is to be rolled away from the temple of God, and the ark of His covenant, rich with all the messages of his holy prophets, is to be seen

openly unveiled. There are thus distinct and successive stages in this increase of light; in the first opening of the Gospel and the time of St. John, in the latter times of apostasy, in the dawn of the Reformation, and in the outpouring of the last vial, which seems to be now close at hand.

Further, this promise of growing light not only belongs to different ages of the Church, but in the same age to every Christian, as he advances in holiness, and searches more deeply into the word of God. He will thus obtain a fuller knowledge of these truths, or a deeper and firmer grasp on the truths already made known to him. Where the religion of the heart is neglected, no curious search into times can hope for a Divine blessing. And even where there is growth in holiness, this special gift can only be looked for, where there are special desires and prayers for its attainment, and the means of knowledge are wisely improved. But where there is both a general and special preparation, this precious gift of the Spirit will be vouchsafed in larger and larger measure. Daniel was marked from his early years by eminent grace: yet it was not until he and his companions had desired mercy of the God of heaven for this secret, that even the first vision was revealed to him. In each later prophecy earnest prayer and confession led the way, or

earnest inquiry followed the Divine message. The God of Daniel is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. When we search his word with prayer and reverence, He will still reveal to us its hidden wonders, and all that is safe or profitable for his children to know. We shall gain such knowledge of the times, clearer and clearer to the last, as may quicken our zeal and guide our hopes, and prepare us for the coming of the Lord; and the rest will be wisely and graciously reserved from us, as from the beloved prophet; until we also stand in our lot in the end of the days, when these times and seasons shall lose themselves in a sea of glory in the kingdom of God.

And now, in closing, let us apply the whole subject to our own hearts, and gain from it some lessons of our duty in the present day. We have seen that a right knowledge of the times and seasons is of growing importance to the Church; that many examples, of saints on earth and angels in heaven, are given to encourage our search, and warrant us to hope for the blessing; that the difficulties or objections should lead us to caution and humility, but can never excuse our neglect; and that fuller light may now be looked for than in any former age, and will be given in proportion to our diligence, our zeal for Christ,

and love to His name. What, then, is the practical lesson for ourselves? They who have searched into these times most narrowly, declare with one voice that great and solemn events are at hand. This or the other conjecture about this or the other exact year, may be true or false, may be wise or unwise ; may be proposed with modest reserve, or with a sinful rashness. But in the general outline of the prospect before us, all, or nearly all, agree. They believe that this generation will not pass away, or will barely pass away, before great and wonderful changes shall be fulfilled. The Power which has trodden down the Holy Land for ages, the waters of the great river which has come up over the breadth of Immanuel's land, will be utterly dried up and wasted away. The Jews will be gathered out of all countries, and be restored to the land of their fathers. Conflicts more and more intense, of which even now the signs are around us, will rend the visible Church ; until one last fierce convulsion of Papal or Infidel persecution, or both combined in one, will shake all the nations of the earth, and bring on the predicted judgment. The Lord himself, though the exact time may be still veiled, will then arise to judge His enemies, to save the meek of the earth, and to have mercy upon Zion. The people may now be labouring in the very fire,

and weary themselves for very vanity. The fever of worldliness may waste the vitals of states and kingdoms as with burning heat and bitter destruction; but soon the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, and it shall cleave asunder at His touch, and there shall be a great valley. Jerusalem, now desolate, shall become the throne of the Lord, and "He will make the place of his feet glorious." Then "the heavens shall rejoice and the earth be glad; the sea shall roar, and the fulness thereof, before the Lord; for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with truth." Blessed are they that shall have part in that kingdom of God; for "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

In the prospect, my brethren, of such events, what kind of knowledge of the times may we suppose will be acceptable with God? Not that which puffs us up with our fancied wisdom, but that which nerves us for the approaching conflict. It is the knowledge which shall humble us in the dust, like the prophet, to confess our own sins and the sins of our country. It is the knowledge which teaches us to be sober and watch unto

prayer. It is that clear vision of truth which shall raise us above the fevered atmosphere of worldly strife and political debate, to walk in the light of God's holy and everlasting counsels. It is such a knowledge as St. Peter exhorts us to secure; which brings in its train, temperance in our desires for worldly comforts, patience under present or future trials, deep reverence towards God, fervent love to the brethren, and compassion and kindness to all our fellow-men. It is, in short, such a view of the past as enables us to see clearly in every age the perpetual fulfilment of God's counsel; and such a view of the future as leads us to rejoice daily in hope of the glory of God, and the sure and rapid approach of Messiah's kingdom.

For, even without inquiring into exact dates, which of the periods of prophecy does not now offer us plain marks that it is either run out or ready to expire? Do the three times and a half limit the reign of the Papal Antichrist? And is not the Christian Jezebel, even now, painting her face for the last time, and looking out from her lattice to attract fresh admirers of her beauty? Is she not even now, by the lips of her followers, railing against the Jehu-like zeal of the Reformers, as a proud and wicked insurrection of self-will against the visible delegate of Christ on the earth? So

skilfully does she array herself, that could she only clear her cheeks of the detestable effrontery of the harlot, and cleanse her hands from the blood of Naboth, we might almost mistake her for an angel of light. Does another period mark its own close by the cleansing of the Eastern sanctuary? Even now a pure and holy worship is rising on Mount Zion, like a handful of corn on the top of the mountains, and gives an earnest of times near at hand, when the fruit thereof shall be like Lebanon in its ancient glory. Does a third period close when God has finished scattering the power of the holy people? Even now the Jews are looking wistfully and hopefully to the land of their fathers, and the worldly interests of rival nations seem ready to remove the last hindrance from their return. If the second woe might seem to have ended, when the tide of Turkish conquest was turned backward and stemmed for ever, its close is now far plainer, when the very power to persecute Christians has been openly disclaimed. The mystic Euphrates seems thus to own that its bed is dry, and gives warning that the true Cyrus is near at hand.

Surely, then, the question of our Lord to the Jews should now pierce deeply into our conscience. We can discern the face of the sky. We can explore secrets of the earth, hidden

from all past ages, and our science can discover, with wonderful precision, the starry course of the heavens. But how is it that we do not discern the signs of the times? Why are we, in this age, so skilled in all knowledge of outward things, and so dim-sighted to the providence of God? When the woe was let loose, we are told that there was one voice from the four horns of the heavenly altar. Is there not now also one consenting voice from the four quarters of the world, addressed to the dull ears of the Church, and this a voice from the Holy Spirit of God? At present it is the whisper of merciful forbearance, amidst busy and earnest preparation; but soon it may be changed for the voice of many waters, "the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear." Soon even the voice of those water-floods may be stilled by one still mightier,—the voice of the Lord who sitteth above the waters, and who remaineth a King for ever.

May we, my brethren, like the men of Issachar, have understanding of the times, to know what the servants of God ought to do. Let us not continue in the sleep of worldliness and in the darkness of sin. Let our knowledge of the times lead us to prepare for eternity. Let us, amidst the signs of approaching judgment, shelter our souls in the covenant of grace; and cast away the works of

darkness and clothe ourselves with the armour of light; because we see the day approaching, and the morning of the resurrection may be near at hand. Let us take to ourselves the "breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation;" that, whatever changes may be at hand, our souls shall be sheltered in the chambers of Divine mercy, and the short night of fear and trouble be speedily followed by a blessed morning of everlasting joy.

LECTURE IX.

THE ADVENT A MOTIVE OF ALARM TO THE WORLDLY.

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1 THESS. V. 3.

*“ For when they shall say, Peace and safety,
then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as
travail upon a woman with child; and they
shall not escape.”*

ALLUSION has been made more than once, my Christian friends, in the course of these Lectures, to the commonly-received opinion, that the Second Advent is less startling and less stringent as a motive than death. I must confess I should feel disposed to deny the truth of that opinion as a matter of fact, even if I did not feel that the

Scripture leaves us in no doubt as to its inaccuracy.

Before I had ever searched the Scriptures with the object of learning what the Holy Ghost teaches on this particular subject, I was in the habit of making the same assertion. Prejudice may do much to warp the judgment, but downright ignorance does much more. It not only blinds the eye, but stirs up that unruly member, the tongue, to give utterance to opinions in words, strong in proportion to the degree of ignorance which dictated them. It is this which makes a course of lectures such as the present so important. The constant repetition of truth, and the denial of contrast errors, constrains, as it were, men to think upon, if not to investigate, the subject. I have rejoiced to find many of my dear friends and brethren in this parish acknowledge the importance and the prominence given to those topics in the Word of God.

But independently of Scripture testimony, permit me to remark, that death has *not* that awakening and stirring influence on the minds of men which is asserted by those who reject what are called prophetic views. The suddenness of death is acknowledged in words, and disbelieved at heart. Experience rather confirms this unbelief.

I do not deny that death does sometimes come suddenly. I do not gainsay the fact, that if a person witness the sudden and instantaneous death of a member of his family, it solemnizes his heart, makes him acknowledge the awfulness of the visitation, and on the succeeding Sabbath, with redoubled energy, he cries, "From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us!"

But I appeal to you, first, whether the number of sudden deaths bears any such proportion to the number of those who have been spared to think over the future and reflect on the past on a sick bed, as to say that death is *so* sudden as fitly to be compared with the coming of a thief in the night? And again, I ask, whether, even in the case in which sudden death has been witnessed, it is not an admitted fact that the impressions quickly pass away like "the morning cloud or early dew?" (Hos. vi. 4.)

But it is not so where the doctrine of the Second Advent is admitted to the prominence which is given to the subject in the Word of God. The full belief that the Saviour may appear this year, or next year, or even in our own day, must startle and must arouse some feeling within our breasts. We picture to ourselves, on *the one* theory, some hundreds of years perhaps, during which we shall lie in the cold ground, separated

from those dear to us in the flesh, and not admitted to the full participation of those eternal joys promised to God's dear children: but on *this* theory we may expect, and do expect, speedily to see our God and Judge, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, to be finally admitted into His presence, and to participate in the fulness of joy at His right hand for evermore. When these views are heartily embraced they display the comparative emptiness of this world's wealth and the folly of that over anxiety for the future, which makes so many slaves now and companions of devils hereafter.

I will not, however, in addressing a congregation who have repudiated this dogma, or who are, at any rate, free from prejudice in its favour, occupy the time by contrasting at greater length the comparative power of either theory, but will at once proceed to treat the question affirmatively according to the wording of the subject upon which I am to speak to-night, namely, "THE SECOND ADVENT A MOTIVE OF ALARM TO THE WORLDLY."

May the Lord grant us the presence of His Holy Spirit while I endeavour to unfold this subject from the words of my text! Our first inquiry must be "*What is meant by the term* WORLDLY?"

The world is used in many different senses in the word of God. Its meaning must now be

strictly defined before we can understand who are intended by "*the worldly*."

The world is sometimes used in the sense of the universe, "The world was made by Him." This is *not* the meaning here. It is also used as the common name for all mankind, "By one man sin entered into the world." "God so loved the world that he sent His only begotten son." This, again, is *not* the meaning here.

I should rather define the world as the contrast principle to heaven. Wherefore the Apostle John says, in his first Epistle 2d chap. and 15th verse, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*"

From this, then, we may readily infer that by the worldly are meant those who are incited by motives, influenced by principles, and encouraged by objects, the reverse of those of the children of God. All men are by nature the children of wrath. They are under the dominion of the "*Prince of this world,*" "*the god of this world,*" and continue so until by a saving change wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, on account of the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, they are set free from this bondage and become children of God by adoption, *And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* (Rom. viii. 17.)

But in dealing with a subject such as that before me, it is desirable that I should leave more general statements and enter upon particular cases by way of illustration. I will, therefore, examine the question **NATIONALLY, SOCIALLY, and PERSONALLY.**

1. **NATIONALLY.** Alas! my brethren, a professedly Christian land may be essentially worldly. The wise man has taught us that "*Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*" (Prov. xiv. 34.) Righteousness is here doubtless used in the sense of **HOLINESS**—but nothing is holy which does not bear reference to God. Therefore every act which is national, which may or may not emanate from the Legislature, but which does not bear reference to principles sanctioned by the revealed Word of God is unrighteous, disgraceful, and extremely dangerous. It is **WORLDLY.**

Questions ought then to be examined, and rejected or adopted on their own merits as agreeing or disagreeing with the Word of God. The principle so much advocated in these days of expediency thus appears to me to be eminently **WORLDLY.**

The doctrine of expediency is nowhere sanctioned by the Word of God; that is to say, it is nowhere sanctioned by Scripture in any matter

which involves *principle*. The Apostle does indeed say, *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient*, but he is referring to things in themselves indifferent. The grand question ought to be *what is right* or *what is wrong?* then, "Duties are ours, events are God's." Jeroboam thought it expedient to set up calves at Dan and Bethel, to assist the people in worshipping the God of Israel; but this was contrary to the commandment of God, it became sin before the Lord. (1 Kings xii.) The Israelites thought it expedient to slight the Word of God and ally themselves with an Idolatrous nation. They speedily found Egypt was to them as a bruised reed which ran into their own hand and pierced it. O would, my Christian brethren, would that our country would reject such worldly principles, and acknowledging the hand of Divine Providence, boldly determine to act on Scriptural grounds alone, ever bearing on their hearts that blessed truth, "THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH!"

2. But I proceed in the next place to examine the matter SOCIALLY, and here I may divide the community into ministers and people, and I will commence with the former, those who minister in the congregation. It is with sorrow that I am constrained to acknowledge there is much of worldliness among professed ministers of the Gospel

of Jesus Christ. I stay not to look back at days gone by, when the Church of England was asleep, when Dissent was rising in our land, and when had it not been for the true members of the Church of Christ, of whatever denomination they might be, many more souls would have perished eternally; but I confine myself to the circumstances of the present day. What can be more strikingly worldly than the standard of truth advocated by some of signing tests, confessedly meaning one thing, in another and a non-natural sense? What can be more strikingly worldly than asserting that this is consistent with good faith? Does it not savour of the prince of this world, the very Father of lies?

If it be possible to see a worldly spirit more plainly manifested, I would quote the opinion of one who claims a right as a teacher and expounder of God's Truth to believe one thing and teach another. What is this, I ask, but the language of that worldly god who, having heard God's truth, and having experienced God's power, whispered to our first mother, Eve, "*Ye shall not surely die?*" Or I may refer to others who are always to be found in the crowded assembly, or the philosophical meeting, where nature is extolled and Christ forgotten; or, on the other hand, who are *never* to be seen, because they cannot tear themselves away from the well-stocked library, or other literary luxuries

men who appear to forget the existence of souls, till the solemn toll of the passing bell reminds them they must hasten to the burial-ground, to thank God for having pleased "to deliver another brother out of the miseries of this sinful world."

But if these are truths, if these are faithful descriptions of any ministers, there is no less worldliness to be descried amongst the people. Look, for instance, at the fear which is so common of confessing Christ before men. How pious are some, where all is piety around! How wicked are the same where worldliness abounds! How Demas-like can some walk with an apostle for a season, and then from the love of this present world fall away. How many fears exist lest an acknowledgment of Christ as our Master and Friend should bring down upon us the laughter and ridicule of the world! How many doubts and hesitations, lest acting upon Christian principles, and following out Christian practice, should injure our worldly interest! How many cares and anxieties, lest giving up much for the service of Christ and the extension of his kingdom, should diminish our worldly comforts, or in anywise hazard our worldly fame! What are all these things but **WORLDLINESS**? And who is not, in some measure, guilty?

Again, what is it but **WORLDLINESS**, or selfishness, for they are twin sisters, and may well be

mistaken the one for the other; what is it but **WORLDLINESS**, I ask, which makes a man stand quietly by hearing God's name profaned, Christian principles ridiculed, God's providence denied, under the pretence that it is not his business to interfere, while Scripture tells us, "*not to suffer sin on our neighbour, but in anywise rebuke him.*" (Levit. xix. 17.) "*Saving them with fear, pulling them out of the fire.*" (Jude 23.) Heaven's first law is LOVE. God's great object is the salvation of man. But Worldliness cries, No! let man perish if he will perish! *My business, my desire, my object, is to save myself.*

3. Once more, I will consider the subject **PERSONALLY**; and under this head I may allude to the *man of pleasure*, the *man of business*, and the *man of science*. To the first, my question applies universally; to the others far too frequently. You cannot doubt the correctness of my statement if you will give the subject a moment's reflection. When we know of men, whose first thought in the morning, and whose last thought at night, is how they may amuse themselves, and in what manner they may most rapidly pass away that precious time which should be used in preparing for eternity, you must allow its truth. Such a life as this is worse than that of the Zoophyte! It is disgraceful to an immortal being! And

yet, how many in the pursuit of that ephemeral phantom, Pleasure, can pass hour after hour in taking thought what they shall eat, or what they shall put on! How many a poor woman has been consigned to an early grave by disease brought on through the fatigue occasioned by the tyrannous demands of fashionable life! I tremble to think, at the disclosures which shall be made in the great day of account, of the consequences of late invitations and procrastinated orders, to make up for which, nature has been forced beyond her power. It is horrible to think how many of the higher ranks of society thoughtlessly purchase their gaieties at the expense of the pallid faces and diseased lungs of the poor dressmakers of this metropolis.

But these are so *confessedly* worldly, I need not dwell further on the matter. These act for the world; their desire is to enter into the world, to obtain the applause of the world, to secure success in the world. In one word, they are “OF THE WORLD.”

2. I proceed, then, to speak of the *man of business*. In my own experience even, I can, with thankfulness, assert that there are many men of business as faithful and as devoted Christians as can be found in any class of life whatever. Nor is there any reason why there should not be.

Scripture speaks of men being "*not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*;" but, nevertheless, it is a fact admitting of no dispute, that many are so entangled by the cares of this life, and so fully occupied in that business which concerns this life only, that they avowedly cannot attend during the week to spiritual subjects, and on the Lord's-day they are so jaded and worn that perfect rest is absolutely necessary to their existence. This may be very diligent, and *humanly* speaking, may merit success; but, *scripturally* speaking, it is downright WORLDLINESS. It is spending strength for nought. It is living with no thought of eternity; and, undoubtedly, without the fear of God before their eyes.

3. Or, if we turn to the *man of science*,—true there is no reason against, but every reason for, hoping that science may contribute to enforce the truths of revelation, as indeed we may bless God it has often done. But instances are not rare where the pride of the human mind has led men to conclude that everything *above* reason (if, at least, it be connected with religion) is *contrary* to reason, and thus they have brought down the infinite mind of Deity to the limit of the puny faculty of man. Such *wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*. But it is owing to this intellectual pride that we often

find men "*denying the Lord who bought them,*" disowning the agency of the Spirit, and laughing at the notion of the efficacy of prayer. Thus they despise the privileges, disobey the commands, and lose the comforts of vital religion.

II. But it is time that I should now inquire *how the doctrine of the Second Advent ought to affect the circumstances of such as these.* It may not be without its use that we should observe the language used concerning the return of our Lord, and contrast it with that of the worldly.

The believer is represented as saying, "*I will seek him whom my soul loveth.*" (Song of Solomon, iii. 2; see also viii. 14.) The worldly as declaring they "*will not have this man to reign over them.*" The believer says, "*Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*" The modern Sadducees beseech him to depart from them. The believer works for the Lord because the time is short. The worldly live for themselves, because the time is so long. The believer would have "*his moderation known unto all men, because the Lord is at hand.*" (Phil. iv. 5.) The worldly cry, Let us live while we live; let us "eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." The one speaks of the blessed hope, and the other of the terrible day of the Lord's appearing. The adulteress desires the

return of her husband to be delayed. The chaste wife exclaims, "*Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?*" The believer says, that "*he shall be satisfied when he awakes up in the likeness of his Redeemer.*" The worldly, like the rich fool, only thinks of pulling down his barns and building greater, because he delighteth himself in his accumulated wealth. How different are the feelings, the tastes, the pleasures of the children of this world, and the children of God!

But I must return to my point,—*How ought the doctrine of the Second Advent of Christ to influence the conduct of man.* It is necessary to speak cautiously on this point, for many, not careful to discriminate between truth in simplicity and truth in exaggeration, reject the Scripture through the follies of professors.

1. I remark then first of all, *It must not make us eccentric.* It is not by follies of dress, neglect of personal appearance, a contempt for the common courtesies of life, or a mournful appearance, that we shall commend to the consciences of others the truth that we, as Christians, "*look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*" (2 Cor. iv. 18); or that "*in this tabernacle we groan, earnestly desiring to be*

clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." (2 Cor. v. 2.) The Scripture never teaches us that a man should make himself ridiculous.

2. Nor should these views *drive us out of the world*. The Apostle (1 Cor. vii. 20,) especially directs "*every man to abide in the same calling wherewith he was called.*" God himself calls us to different spheres and positions of life, and we have no more right to withdraw from those duties when lawful, upon any fancy of our own, than we have to enter upon a line of life in which we dare not ask the blessing of God. Jonah had no more right to take ship to Tarshish when his course was ordered to Nineveh, than he would have had to proclaim the certain destruction of the Great City in forty days, except at the plain and direct command of God. We are bound, however, *so to use this world as not to abuse it*. Our Lord prayed not that his people might be *taken out of the world*, but that they might be kept *from the evil* which is in the world. (John xvii. 15.) Duty must never be neglected; on the contrary, the sense of the nearness of the period should only make us the more anxious, lest the trumpet should sound before the work is done. The door once shut, is shut for ever!

3. My brethren, the subject should speak in a voice admitting of no misinterpretation. *Pause*

in your career. It says, Thou hast an immortal soul. Thou art travelling now from day to day. Thou hast here no abiding city. Whither art thou going? There are two roads; on which art thou journeying? to heaven or to hell? Thou art on the one road or the other. Take heed lest there be any mistake. Solemnize thine heart. "*It is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*" (Rom. xiii. 11.) Thou art, perhaps, in rude and strong health. Death, for aught thou canst see, is far off. Be it so. But Jesus Christ may not be. It is when they say, "*Peace and safety, then it is that sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child ; and they shall not escape.*"

Self-examination is not, however, sufficient. If that be all, it may only lead to increased condemnation. It must be followed *by earnest and diligent preparation.* By preparation I need not say is meant, first, a right knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; not only a knowledge of Him *historically*, not only a knowledge of Him *theoretically*, but a knowledge of Him *personally* ; a feeling of having an interest in Him, in his finished work, in His continual intercession, and, I may add, in His glorious return.

It implies the *gradual and progressing work of*

grace in the Heart, of the existence of which you are bound to seek to be well assured, lest when the cry is raised, that “*the bridegroom cometh*,” you may be found like the foolish virgins without any oil in your lamps. May the Lord *make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men. . . . To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.* (1 Thess. iii. 12, 13.)

III. Let me now ask your attention while I proceed on the inquiry, *Why should the doctrine of the Second Advent be a cause of alarm to the worldly.*

This we shall learn first, from THE OBJECT, and secondly, from THE NATURE of that Advent. If you will read 2 Thess. i. 7—10, you will perceive there is a two-fold object in the Lord’s return. “*When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ : who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*” Here, then, is one object, the chastisement, I had rather say, the *destruction* of the enemies of the *Lord*, of all who are not reconciled to the Father through the blood of the Son.

The second object is contained in the tenth verse, "*He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.*" In the first of these portions we have the doom of the wicked, in the other the hope of the righteous.

Inasmuch, then, as the wicked, that is the worldly, are not reconciled to God through the Son, for *The friends of the world are the enemies of God*, it is clear that the Second Advent is a ground of most awful warning. It is no less clear, that as the hope set before us in this passage is confined to the believer; that is, to those who from an assured confidence in the Redeemer act not upon worldly motives but upon Scriptural principles, even by "*the Word of God which effectually worketh also in them that believe,*" so the Second Advent brings with it double misery to the damned. For it shews forth *to* them and yet shuts out *from* them the happiness of the believer, and consigns them to everlasting perdition.

But my text leads me to speak more especially of THE NATURE OF THAT COMING, which is to be *sudden as to the time*. The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night; that is, when men least expect it. How little is this remembered by the worldly, may I not say, by any of us! Is it not a matter of astonishment that men should live so

much without God in this world? Listen to their arrangements for years yet to come, see their hearts engrossed by frivolity, mark the worldly mother seeking to secure for her no less worldly daughter a marriage with one as celebrated for his ungodliness as he is for his wealth. Observe the father pampering his body while he is starving his soul. How ready the ear to catch the filthy jest or song profane, and yet how deaf to the warning of the Lord, "*As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*"

I can picture to myself some hearing these lectures with the scoffer's smile on their brow, I can see some reading them with the Infidel sneer on their lips, but, let me ask, who can tell that the Lord may not unexpectedly appear? Doubtless, the Antediluvians laughed as Noah was building the ark in silent fear and faithful obedience, but Noah was saved, the world were drowned. Take heed to yourselves, brethren, that that day come not upon you unawares!

My Christian brethren, you must not forget that we are often met by an objection to this point, I mean

that commentators have again and again settled the year in which this coming is to take place. Thus we hear of some who have predicted that 1844 would see the termination of this dispensation. Others, with no less confidence, venture to predict that in 1847 we may look for this great event. It is not my province to enter upon the right knowledge of times and seasons. This has been already done by a more powerful mind and an abler hand than mine, and may God bless the Word spoken by the mouth of that brother in the Lord! I will only, therefore, venture to suggest that the mistakes which have been made so far from making us reject the subject, should rather be an additional incentive to watchfulness. They seem to prove the very sudden and unexpected nature of the Advent, and to cry aloud, "*Watch, therefore, for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come.*"

But there is another objection which is sometimes started to the suddenness of the punishment of the wicked; namely, that the Scripture asserts that there is a long interval between the resurrection of the wicked and that of the righteous. It is true, that on the resurrection morning the just will arise, but the rest of the dead will not arise until the thousand years are finished. (Rev. xx.) But you must observe, that the sudden destruction of the wicked bears no reference to those who are in

their graves, at all. The destruction of the wicked, sudden as it is, refers to those who are among the quick, those who are alive on earth on that day. This destruction of the wicked contrasts with the sudden translation of the righteous to be for ever with the Lord.

Brethren, suffer no man to deceive you with vain words on this subject. If the sign of the Son of Man, and the cry of the Bridegroom coming, be the same thing, (and I suspect that they are,) a very plain lesson is set before you. You may hurry about hither and thither; you may cry out to others, Give me oil for my lamp, give me grace in my heart, but the door will be closed ere you are prepared, and the sentence will be passed, "*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*" (Rev. xxii. 11.)

2. But to proceed. The return of our Lord shall be quick and clear as the lightning, "*For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*" (Matt. xxiv. 27.) How will some start upon their feet when this period shall arrive! Look at Belshazzar, surrounded by women and dissolute companions, in the very midst of every

luxury which could blind his sense of responsibility, how he started at the appearance of the writing on the wall, proclaiming the awful truth, that he should be *weighed in the balance and found wanting*. His alarm is as nothing compared with the terror which will be written in the faces of THE WORLDLY on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot hide yourselves then; you may laugh *now*, but you will howl *then*; you may lift up your heads *now* with all the pride of human greatness, but you will call *then* on the mountains to fall upon you and hills to cover you, but that call will be in vain. The very brightness of that coming will discover you. Then the proud, self-satisfied Pharisee will hang down his head, yea, "*the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*" (Isa. ii. 17.)

Oh! I know full well what is passing through the unconverted hearts of some. You survey the multitude travelling on the broad road which leads to destruction. Blind yourselves, deceived by the smoothness of the path, you discern not the frightful yawning abyss into which you are about inevitably to plunge, and vainly imagine so great a multitude cannot perish: but "*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against ALL ungodliness and*

unrighteousness of men." (Rom. i. 18.) That wrath will be poured out "*when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (2 Thess. i. 7, 8.)

3. The Advent will be *a sifting or a separating time*. These are days when religion, a kind of religion, is fashionable; when every one thinks he must give an opinion upon matters connected with religion. Thus opinions upon Rubrical observances or outward forms are given with as much freedom as if the speaker had really examined the question; and opinions are maintained with as much pertinacity as if the salvation of the soul depended upon their correctness. But in the day of the Lord, trifles, worthless drivelling trifles such as these, will find their own level, and the real value of vital, spiritual, hearty religion, will be known. The spiritual worshipper of the sanctuary, the simple believer in Jesus, will then be acknowledged by Him whose good opinion is the only one worth possessing. Then will it be known which is of most value, Tractarian formalities or Evangelical truth. Then will it be known that something more is required to make a Christian than a baptismal nomination, and something more is necessary to make a

member of the Church of Christ, than reverence for the outward sign of a holy sacrament. Two shall then be in the field, for ought we can see, both equal ; but the will of the Omnipotent shall determine that " the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; the one shall be taken, and the other left." (Matt. xxiv. 41, 42.) The separation will then be made "*between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*" (Mal. iii. 18.)

4. This leads me to remark, in the next place, that the Advent will be to the wicked as *destructive as the flood of waters*. Carelessness then will prove to be of somewhat greater importance than the world has been accustomed to assign to it. *Now*, provided a man be clever, agreeable, and moderately moral, the world is prepared to overlook his carelessness upon religious subjects. But *then*, it shall not be so ; carelessness shall be stripped of her decent name, and INFIDELITY shall be branded upon her brow. God has said, The Lord will come *suddenly*. Unbelief has made men careless ; and what is the consequence ?—they will be destroyed like the unbelieving Antediluvians in that day. Rest assured, though gross immorality has sent its THOUSANDS to hell, unbelieving carelessness will send there its TENS OF THOUSANDS.

How fearful is the language of the Apocalypse on this point (chap. xix. 17, &c.), "*I saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God ; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth ; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*"

I appeal to every unconverted man, every man of the world, whether these fearful words are not directed against him. St. James tells you plainly, if you are friends of the world you are the enemies of God ; and the second Psalm warns

you that "*God will break his enemies with a rod of iron, and will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*"

My dear brethren, do not vainly flatter yourselves with the notion that such expressions are only suited to the openly profane, or to the grossly immoral. Scripture tells us that God is angry with, and will punish the worldly-minded, the lovers of pleasure, and the formalist also. Many a soul will be sent to hell in that day with a good worldly reputation. When the Lord Jesus shall come again, none can escape His piercing eye. "*He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver : and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.*"

Many, many blind, forgetful, now listening to the Lord's warning, "*Your words have been stout against me,*" are ready to reply, "*What have we spoken so much against thee ?*" (Mal. iii. 13.) But these convinced, terrified, conscience-stricken, will look at one another in the presence of Jesus, and exclaim with the convicted Patriarchs of old, "*We are verily guilty concerning this our brother.*" (Gen. xlii. 21.)

I have now, my brethren, endeavoured to set before you why the Second Advent ought to be a motive of alarm to the WORLDLY. From its *object*

and its *nature*,—its object being twofold, the destruction of the wicked, and the glorification of Christ in the believer ; its nature being sudden and unexpected, as the coming of a thief in the night,—clear as the lightning, separating as a refiner's fire, and destructive as the flood.

It remains for me to address different classes in the midst of this ungodly world.

1. First, I would turn to that increasingly large body who *wish to be thought religious but who also wish to be as worldly as they can*. A class who are continually inquiring how much they may mix with the world and how many things they may do like the world. Whereas, seeing that Jesus has declared that *His people are not of the world even as He is not of the world*, they ought to inquire how far with propriety they may differ from the world, how little, consistently with their respective duties, they are required to live in the world ; and how closely they can conform to the image of God's dear Son.

What is the real cause of anxiety to be thus like the world? Like loves like. It is essentially **WORLDLINESS OF PRINCIPLE**. Can there be glowing within your breast any real love for God, His word, His precepts, His people? Is not your religion a constraint more than a privilege? Whereas, you know full well your heart ought to

abound in love to God, love to each other, love towards all men, and your whole lives ought to manifest the constraining power of the love of Christ by the devotion of yourselves to the service of that Master who in His love bought you with a price, giving himself for you?

I warn you, brethren, not to be thus ashamed of Jesus, ashamed of being known as a separatist from the world, ashamed of being a recognised follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the day come upon you and find you thus ashamed of Christ, of you also will Christ be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with His angels.

2. I may turn from you, however, to another class of this wealthy country. A class, *whose names may be found on very many subscription lists of charitable Societies, who are by no means seldom to be found at the table of the Lord, but who in no one thing ever deny themselves.* These look at their well-filled purse and say, God has given me so much of this world's wealth that I cannot deny myself pecuniarily. Certain dresses, certain equipages, certain establishments become my station. By maintaining these I contribute to the well-being of the hard-working and industrious artisan, therefore self-denial is not called for from me.

Is there then no other means, let me ask, by which you may deny yourselves except in the matter of money? Have you no *time* at your disposal? I speak not now merely of the more common duties of visiting the poor at their own dwellings, shewing some sympathy with your fellow-creatures, or in endeavouring to teach the ignorant. I grant that some may be unable to do either of these; they contribute largely, I will suppose, to Pastoral-Aid Societies, Bible Societies, Scripture-reading Societies, Missionary Societies at home and abroad, and thus excuse themselves.

But can you also acquit yourselves of your conduct to your poorer relations? Has there been no pride, no selfishness, shewn towards them? Have you never felt ashamed of them because they *were* poor? Have you taken care that your well-fed servants should be well-taught Christians? Have you so far denied yourselves on the Sabbath-day that every dependent of your household shall be allowed to attend at the house of God? Do you so far deny yourselves as to arrange your hours in such a manner that family worship may be regularly and profitably maintained in your house? Why is it that you can hold family worship in the morning and neglect it in the evening? Why must that privilege be denied to your household because there is a party in your house? Is not

your God the God of your friends too? If not, what fellowship ought you to have with such friends? Do you reply, "It is impossible?" Why so? I will tell you. Because the fashions and habits and customs and the hours of **THE WORLD** make it impossible. Is this too much to give up for heaven? Is the body which the apostle speaks of as *vile* so precious to you that self-denial is impossible? That body, now so favoured, will become viler yet. I speak not of its becoming corrupt, the food for the worms of the earth; but I speak of the time when it shall be reunited to the soul, and when both body and soul shall be cast into hell. Truly your feelings must differ indeed most widely from the experience of the believer which leads him to adopt the language of the apostle, (Rom. viii. 23,) "*Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*" O no! my brethren, to what end is the day of the Lord for you? "*The day of the Lord is darkness and not light; yes, that day for you shall be even very dark and no brightness in it.*" (Amos v. 18, 20.)

3. Once more I would address myself to those *who are daily meditating how they can lay by the largest sums of money; who scarcely contribute anything to the temporal or to the spiritual wants of others, and who if any misfortune happen to*

themselves, immediately consider that retrenchment must begin with those few charities to which they have given assistance. Verily, it does seem as if the warnings concerning the dangers of the rich were specially directed to you, for it is clear you practically deny that you are but stewards for the Lord. O what will be your money, your houses, your lands in that day? How readily would you then part with all, if it were possible, to purchase *the pearl of great price*, if you could but secure to yourselves the slightest interest in the *unsearchable riches of Christ*.

It is no answer to say, as some do, I am no murderer, no thief, no backbiter, no persecutor; have I no right to use my wealth as I please? *It is mine*, I injure no one. Brethren, your life is not given you that you may *do no harm*. Your life is given you that you may *do good*. “*What do ye more than others?*” is the question for a Christian. Look at the parable of the talents. Jesus is that man now travelling into a far country, and who has called his servants and delivered unto them his goods. That Lord will come again and reckon with those servants. He will turn to you who have done no harm, and addressing you as the unprofitable servant, will command that you be *cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

O brethren, your baptismal vows meant something more than that you would do no harm. These vows will rise up in judgment against you in that day. Stand before the Lord you must. How will Christ look upon you then? If His look of love so melted the heart of Peter, what will His look of wrath do for *you*?

But, my dear friends, why must there be a look of wrath in that day? Why must that day be a day of darkness for you? Is not God "*waiting to be gracious?*" "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*" (2 Pet. iii. 9.) Is it not the year of the redeemed? Is it not a day on which you might rejoice and be glad? There is forgiveness offered now to the most worldly. Christ's blood cleanseth from *all* sin. Happiness has been purchased for you. It is offered to you now "*without money and without price.*" All were as you now are. Be you now as some are, washed, sanctified, and justified. Jesus is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. The Holy Spirit can change your hearts, will you seek Him? If you do seek Him, fear not, you *will* find Him. Worldliness will flee away. "*Old things will pass away, and all things will become new.*" You yourselves now

worldly, now in danger, now in alarm, will become "*new creatures in Christ Jesus.*" That same Spirit will "*bear witness with your spirits that you are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.*" Then on that day there will be no shame for you, no fear for you, for "*you are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of your inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.*" (Eph. i. 13, 14.)

Dear brethren, I feel that the subject which has been allotted to me has been treated in a manner which has been almost painful to a large body of dear Christian friends here present, many of whom, perhaps, have been followers of Jesus for a long season, and who have been, and now are, "*waiting for the consolation of Israel.*" Still I do not regret having been led thus to speak to you; for while I hope, by God's blessing, it may do good to some few worldly-minded, unconverted, straggling listeners, as well as to others who may afterwards read the sermon, I feel it may tend to quicken some of you also, leading you both to self-examination and to increased exertion.

For instance, let me ask, if you have not some worldly relatives, who you know, if God's Word be true, and the signs of a regenerate heart con-

tained therein be correct, are not converted? What are you doing for their souls? If you knew that a fire were raging in the middle of the night near their dwelling, and you felt alarmed for their lives, would you not take steps for their safety?—would you not wake the sleepers, warn the careless, and endeavour to rouse all to make their safety doubly sure? But what are you doing for these friends and relatives now? You profess to believe, not indeed that fire from heaven has fallen, but that the end draweth nigh, that the Lord is at hand, that his coming is sudden, clear, sifting, and destructive; and yet you allow them to continue unwarned, uncared for!

I know the difficulty, I know the danger to which you expose yourselves; I know the accusations to which interference will subject you: but the night is dark; they are in darkness; danger is coming on; they must be warned; if possible, they must be saved. Let the subject quicken your exertions. Let your prayers for them be more fervent. Let opportunities be sought for inculcating good. Let no opportunity be lost of discountenancing evil. Oh, how fearful is the thought that on that day, when the cry is raised, that "*the bridegroom cometh,*" when the sign of the Son of Man shall be seen in the

heavens,—that on that day, I say, we shall have to see those nearest and dearest to us left ready for destruction, while we ourselves are caught up “*to meet the Lord in the air!*”

If anything *can* diminish our happiness on that day, surely it will be the reproaches of those relatives who, blind now and ignorant of their wants, will then remind us, that if we did indeed see the truth, the heavy responsibility rested upon us of plucking them, as it were, out of the fire. Bear these unconverted friends on your hearts before the throne of grace. Lay hold of every opportunity which Providence may put in your way of being useful to them. Fear not temporary failure, look for the eternal reward. This is part of the warfare: God give you courage to show yourselves faithful soldiers of the great Captain of our salvation, and then, dear brethren, when the Lord shall come again, you will be ready to take up the apostle's words, “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*” (2 Tim. iii. 7, 8.)

LECTURE X.

THE ASSURANCE OF BELIEVERS IN THE PROSPECT OF THE SECOND ADVENT.

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1 THESS. V. 8, 9.

“ But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love ; and for an helmet the hope of salvation : for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

IN proclaiming the Gospel of the grace of God, the minister of Christ has a twofold object in view : one, the conversion of souls, the other, the edification of believers. In regard to the former, Christ commands, “ Go ye and teach all nations.” In reference to the latter, he directs, “ Feed my sheep.” On this twofold work of the Christian

ministry "every scribe instructed unto the kingdom" will keep his attention diligently fixed. He will strive to be the honoured instrument of bringing souls to Christ, and, when so brought, of building them up in the faith. He will remember that conversion is only the *commencement* of the life of God in the soul of man; that that life requires constant attention and support, and, that in proportion as its powers and faculties are developed, in the same proportion must they be met, directed, and supplied by the ministry of God's holy Word. Hence, a large portion of the attention of the ministers of the Gospel will be directed to the edification of Christ's body, the Church. They will not be content merely with bringing souls into the fold, (though this is a blessed work indeed), but, they will also endeavour, when thus brought, to feed them with food convenient for them that they may grow thereby. They will search the written Word to find what doctrines are most suited to believers, and these they will fully lay before them, that they may grow up into Christ in all things. And thus, knowing the exceeding preciousness of the Church, that she is the spouse and body of Christ, they will by all means seek her edification.*

* In preaching the Gospel, the relative amount of attention to be bestowed on believers, and others, is a subject of much

With this view it is, even for your edification, Believers, that the glorious subject of the Lord's Second Advent has, now, for the third year, been formally brought before you. For, this doctrine, whilst it is profitable to awaken the careless, is chiefly used in Scripture for the quickening, sanctifying, and comfort of believers.

May it, for these several uses, be abundantly blessed to you; and may the preaching of a coming Saviour find a cheerful response in your hearts, and a suitable consistency in your lives, to the praise of Him, who hath called you to His kingdom and glory.

In reference to our present subject, the whole previous context, it will be seen, refers to the Second Advent. Believers are there comforted by the prospect of meeting their deceased Christian friends at the Lord's coming; whilst the state of the ungodly at that period, and the aspect of the righteous in regard to it, are severally noticed. Thus, in the "salvation" mentioned in our text, the mind is led to that full and complete salvation which shall be manifested when the Lord shall come in his glory.

It does not, however, in this course of Lectures, fall to my lot so much to direct your interest and importance. Perhaps, the former are generally too much neglected in the ministration of the Word.

attention to the Advent of our Lord as to THE ASSURANCE OF THE BELIEVER in the prospect of that Advent. The subject of ASSURANCE, therefore, is that to which your attention will, at present, be chiefly directed;—a blessed subject indeed! and may God the Spirit abundantly bless its consideration to the souls of his people.

In the text selected for our meditation, we notice,

I. A CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.—
“Us who are of the day.”

II. THE SALVATION TO WHICH THEY ARE APPOINTED.—“Salvation by Jesus Christ.” And,

III. THEIR ASSURANCE OF THIS SALVATION, of which we have principally to speak, and which embraces the remaining part of the text.

May God, in compassion to our ignorance and weakness, vouchsafe to instruct and strengthen us by his holy Word!

That which first claims our attention is,

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD, as here given.

They are described as being “of the day.” Here, at least, are included the three following particulars:—KNOWLEDGE, HOLINESS, and GLORY.

1. KNOWLEDGE.

“The children of the day” have the light of

understanding. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." So also the Apostle John, "The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding." Thus, believers possess a Divine illumination, a light from the everlasting hills, an irradiation from God's Holy Spirit, which shines into their hearts. They are "the children of light, and of the day;" and, as such, possess the clear light of knowledge. They know whence they are, and whither they are going. They know that "the whole world lieth in the wicked One." As in Egypt of old, whilst all was darkness around, the Israelites had light in their dwellings, so is it now. They have light, and they give light. "Ye," saith our Lord, "ye are the light of the world." This is their privilege and their office;—they receive, and they impart light. Whilst, on the other hand, in regard to the world, it is written, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."

2. HOLINESS is also implied by the term, "of the day."

From the deeds of darkness Christians have become separate. They have "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty;" and having received

power from above, they “put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Their calling is, to be “a peculiar people zealous of good works.” Their title is, “the children of the day.” Their endeavour, therefore, is to walk worthy both of their calling and of their title, and, by making the light of holiness to shine before men, to manifest that their light of knowledge is of a true and influential character. They are the children of the light, and they walk in the light.

3. GLORY is another particular implied by being “of the day.”

Believers are emphatically children of the day, as being the “children of the resurrection;”—that bright day, that “morning without clouds,” when “the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings,” and they shall enter into the joy of their Lord. Oh! what a privilege then to be manifested as the children of day, when all others shall be driven into darkness! Then to shine forth in the kingdom of the Father, when all that this world calls bright and glorious and luminous shall be quenched in night! This, this is a privilege indeed.

And for whom is this reserved? For those who

now possess the light of knowledge, and walk in the light of holiness. In the midst of this world's darkness the people of God are now surrounding themselves with light, and with the eternal light of glory they shall consequently for ever be surrounded. For, their abode shall be the city of God, the New Jerusalem. "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light." They are children of light, and with eternal light they shall be satisfied.

II. The second head of discourse now claims our attention, and that is, THE SALVATION TO WHICH BELIEVERS ARE APPOINTED,—“salvation by Jesus Christ.”

Let us here, first, show BY WHOM comes this salvation; and then speak of the SALVATION ITSELF.

1. Salvation is “BY JESUS CHRIST.” It *originates* in the sovereign will and purpose of the Father, “who so loved the world that *He gave* his only-begotten Son;” but, it *comes to us* by the *Work*, and by the *Spirit* of Christ.

Now, in regard to *the Work*, or righteousness of Christ, it is passive and active; that is, consisting in what He suffered, and in what He did.

(a.) In regard to the passive work, or righteousness of Christ, He endured for sinful man the

extremity of God the Father's justice. A law was given to man, originally written upon his heart, and, subsequently, given from Mount Sinai, the substance of which was, love to God, and love to man. This law received from God the terrible sanction of a curse pronounced on the offender, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law (the great command of which is love), to do them." Now, all have broken this first and great commandment of love ; for, none have loved God "with all their heart," none have loved "their neighbour as themselves." Hence, all have broken the law, and all are, consequently, liable to God's dreadful curse. And, as God has power to inflict, and never swerves from his word, being "a God of truth," it follows that all mankind, having all transgressed, must all, unless a substitute be found, inevitably perish, and that for ever.

Now, it is here that the passive work of Christ (blessed be God) interposes. He has given himself as a substitute, and an adequate substitute, because, being God as well as Man, infinity is His peculiar property ; and thus He becomes a substitute, not only adequate, but of infinitely greater value than those He represents. Hence, there is a fulness, and more than a fulness,—an infinity of perfection, in Christ's substitution for

us ; in which capacity, oh, amazing love ! putting himself in our place, He endured that curse which otherwise must inevitably have fallen upon us. He suffered, and suffered to the extreme, all that would otherwise have been our portion ; whilst, we have the deep consolation of knowing, that, in bearing the curse of the broken law, the insulted majesty of that law was fully vindicated, by how much the Sufferer was of greater worth than those for whom he suffered. Thus, “ by His stripes we are healed.” The curse is removed from believers, He “ being made a curse for us.” The Church having once federally suffered in Christ, her Head, she cannot, consequently, suffer again in her own person ; and, henceforth, “ there is, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Such is the effect of Christ’s passive righteousness to his people ; they have suffered in Him the punishment due to sin, and, consequently, have nothing more to fear. “ They are without blame before him in love.”

(b.) The active righteousness, or work, of Christ we have next to consider. This consists in what He has done for sinners. And here, again, we have reference to the Law.

Concerning that Law Christ, when on earth, declared, “ Not one jot, or one tittle, shall pass

from the Law till all be fulfilled." The Law, then, must be accomplished. Again, He said, "I came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil." Hence, therefore, one object of his mission was to fulfil the Law; and, accordingly, on the cross, He cried, "It is finished!" Thus, Christ fulfilled the Law; and here, consequently, is a righteousness which He peculiarly possesses. He is a righteous man, because he kept, and perfectly kept, the whole Law. But, being God as well as Man, He is an infinite Person. Hence, infinity attaches to his righteousness; and so his righteousness becomes sufficient for others, and that to an infinite degree. Christ's obedience to the Law, thus considered, will explain the term, "righteousness of God," often used in the New Testament.—"Therein" (in the Gospel) "is the righteousness of God revealed." "The righteousness of God without the Law is manifested." "The righteousness which is of God by faith."* The righteousness here spoken of is not the essential righteousness of the Father, or of the Son, but the righteousness of the God-man, the Lord Jesus, which He obtained through his obedience to the Law; which righteousness He wrought, not for himself, for He needed it not, but for us. And, thus, "He is made unto us righteousness;" believers by faith

* Rom. i. 17; iii. 21, 22, 25, 26. Phil. iii. 9.

embracing and appropriating his work, and so being made partakers of his righteousness. And this is, emphatically, a "righteousness of faith;" because, by faith, and by faith alone, rendered available to those who seek it.

In this manner, therefore, we see the efficacy of Christ's active righteousness; for, whilst by his passive work the curse of the Law is taken from his people, by his active obedience to the same Law, all its perfect righteousness is wrought for them, which by faith is imputed to them, and they are thus "made the righteousness of God in Him." Hence, to the Church of God in Christ Jesus there is a passive and active righteousness: *passive*, because in Him she has suffered the punishment of sin; *active*, because absolute righteousness is hers, even the perfect and spotless righteousness of that Law which Christ hath for his people fulfilled. And thus is brought to pass the saying that is written, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

In thus showing BY WHOM the salvation of the children of the day is accomplished, we should fail if to the work of Christ we did not add *the Spirit* of Christ.

When the Lord had ascended to the Father, He, presently, sent down his Spirit. For, it was foretold in the Psalms, that He should "receive

gifts for men ;” and he had himself promised the descent of the Holy Ghost. Now, the office of this Divine Comforter is, to apply the work of Christ to the hearts of his people. Without the Spirit of Christ the Work of Christ is useless ; for, until by his influences the mind is enlightened and the heart opened to receive Christ, there is an incapacity, yea, an impossibility, even of knowing Him. “ No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” Such is the declaration of Scripture. How essential, then, to the work of salvation for Christ to have procured the agency of that blessed Spirit, and with what earnestness should his gracious influences be sought ! In fact, on his agency depends, in a secondary sense, our salvation ; for “ He divideth unto every one severally as He will ;” and, “ He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.”

This may suffice to shew the incompleteness of the work of Christ in procuring salvation, unless, at the same time, He had sent his Spirit to apply it to the hearts of his people.

2. Of THE SALVATION ITSELF thus procured by Christ, we have now to speak.

Salvation is *present* and *future* ; and, in regard to the former, we may remark, that,

Salvation is spoken of in Scripture as *present*, because it is now begun in the souls of

believers. Thus, it is said, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."* And, again, "Who hath saved us, and called us."† Believers are now justified, are now sanctified; and thus, in this sense, are saved. Salvation is thus begun in them. That work of Christ, of which we have been speaking, is applied by the Spirit to them, and thus they are made partakers of his salvation, into which, by pardon of sin and the participation of his righteousness, they do now truly and effectually enter.

But, our subject does not lead us now so much to present, as to future salvation; and on this, therefore, we shall rather dwell.

Future salvation is the perfecting by the grace of glory that grace of righteousness, which the believing man now possesses. And this is spoken of as "salvation ready to be revealed."

We inquire, when it is to be revealed, and wherein it consists?

(a.) It will not be revealed at death. The Scriptures assert not that it will; and, indeed, for it so to be would be against the nature of things, for, this salvation consists in glorification. Now, glorification is the perfection of the thing glorified. But death is a state of dismemberment; consequently, incompatible with perfection, and hence also, with

* 1 Pet. i. 9.

† 2 Tim. i. 9.

glorification. It follows, therefore, that death and glory, strictly so called, are not united, and that neither the Church collectively, nor the believer individually, does by death attain to glory in its proper sense. At death believers "enter into peace," and "rest from their labours;" but, glory is reserved to an after state.

(b.) When, then, is glory attained? We reply, At the Lord's coming. Then, and not till then, will believers be perfected by reunion to their quickened bodies. Then, and not till then, will the Church be consummated by the assemblage of her scattered members; and thus, each member being complete in itself, and the body complete in the appointed number of its members, an individual and numerical perfection being thus obtained, the Church will be qualified for that glory with which her returning Lord will then invest her.

(c.) Do we inquire, further, in what this salvation of glory consists? We reply, first, from the personal state whereto the saints shall be brought; where, negatively, there will be deliverance from all evil, and, positively, the enjoyment of all perfection which a human being can possess, and then, from the glory, which in that state Christ shall put on them. This glory will consist in

such particulars as the following. In being admitted into his presence, "they shall see his face;" in being engaged in his service, "His servants shall serve Him;" in companionship with Him, "they shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth;" in sharing his dominion, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne;" in wielding his power, "to him that overcometh will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron;" in partaking his glory, "the glory that thou gavest me I have given them;" and, in being made conformable to his likeness, "When I awake up after thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it."

In such deliverance, perfection, and exaltation, will the future beatification of the believer consist; and, such a state well merits the name of salvation. In comparison to this, though exalted, yet how poor and abject is the present condition of the Church! How imperfect the present salvation with which she is endowed! Well, then, may believers look forward towards the future, "waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of the body," from its present state of vanity. Well may they "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," when alone their salvation shall be fully manifested; when "the Lord my God shall come,

and all the saints with thee." Then, and not till then, shall salvation in its fullest sense receive its complete accomplishment.

Having thus spoken of salvation;—having shown by whom it is, when it is to be developed, and wherein it consists;—having thus opened the way to the main part of our subject, we may now speak of,

III. THE BELIEVER'S ASSURANCE CONCERNING HIS OWN SALVATION.

This we may draw from the residue of the text, "Let us be sober, &c., for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation."

Here we shall speak of ASSURANCE, the FOUNDATION OF ASSURANCE, and the EVIDENCE OF ASSURANCE.

1. OF ASSURANCE.

We begin by showing,

That the doctrine of assurance of salvation, whether the salvation be present, or at the coming of Christ, is *scriptural*.

(a.) The general manner in which believers are addressed shows this. The apostles constantly write to their converts, as Saints, as Elect, as Beloved by God, as Saved. Thus, in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called, saints, Grace to

you and peace." So, also, to the Ephesians, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of Him." And, again, to these very Thessalonians, "Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come." And, also, in the Second Epistle to the same, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." The language of our text speaks the same assurance, "Us, who are of the day,"—"God hath appointed us to obtain salvation."

How strong is this language! How demonstrative of, and calculated to inspire, assurance! And how different to the timid phraseology of modern theology, which, needlessly dreading presumption, will scarcely call a Saint a Saint!

To the same effect are the words of our Lord, "He that heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." So, again, "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." And again, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

(b.) Particular Scriptures, also, teach the same blessed truth. Thus to the Corinthians Paul writes, "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us

of God." And again, "I know in whom I have believed,"—Christ, "who loved me, and gave himself for me." So also St. John, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." "We know that we are of the truth." "These things have I written unto you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." "We know that we are of God." "God hath given to us eternal life."

Here, then, are passages, general and particular, sufficient to show that assurance of salvation is a scriptural doctrine.

Let us next see *through what agency* this assurance is applied to the heart.

It is the Spirit of God which effects this blessed work.

By the Holy Spirit believers are—

(a.) "Sealed unto the day of redemption;" that is, are now, by regeneration, marked and separated, that they may, so to speak, be known at the day of the resurrection, when their redemption, at the coming of Christ, shall be fully effected.

(b.) The Spirit is again "the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession;" that is, till the Church, which is purchased by the blood of Christ, shall, at his Advent, be redeemed from death and all bondage.

(c.) The Spirit is also, in the saints, a spirit of

adoption, whereby they are enabled to cry to God their Father, "God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father."

(*d.*) He again "bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

Thus, the Spirit being in the heart of a believing man a seal of separation, an earnest of coming glory, a spirit of adoption, and a witness within the saints that they are heirs of God, He becomes the means of imparting to them an assurance that they are partakers of salvation, and enables them to look forward to the coming of Christ with joy, as being "joint-heirs with Him" in glory.

Such is the blessed work of the Spirit in imparting to the Church of God this grand doctrine of assurance. We now proceed to show,

The uses of this doctrine, which we shall consider in reference to the Individuals assured, in reference to Others, and in reference to God.

(*a.*) In reference to the individuals assured, amongst the results of assurance are holiness and humility.

The possession of assurance is greatly conducive to holiness, and from the following reason:—The greatest and most influential motive

to obedience is love. But, love is begotten in the soul by some excellence or goodness manifested to us in the person loved; and in proportion to the manifestation of that goodness, will be the degree of love called forth. Thus, the soul which hath no perception of the adorable character of the Divine nature, has no love for God. The man, again, who clearly knows and receives Him in his gracious attributes of a sin-pardoning God, such an one loves Him. Whilst, further, he whose soul by experience proves the sweetness and the power of that attribute of pardoning grace applied in the forgiveness and obliteration of *his own sin*,—that man most fully loves the Being who has thus most fully manifested mercy to him. Did he doubt God's mercy to him, he would also doubt God's love; and thus his love towards God would be chilled through a doubt of reciprocity. But now, having no doubt of God's mercy individually to him, the believing soul has, consequently, no doubt of His love. Then, the consciousness of God's love to him excites his love to God, according to that word, "We love Him because He first loved us," and thus love, the great principle of obedience, (in other words, of holiness,) is called forth, and that in proportion to the extent of God's love experienced towards us. Hence, the man that is most

assured will, as a general rule, be the most holy, because he will have a clearer view of God's love to him in the pardon of sin, and consequently will feel called on to do more for God than others. Thus, holiness will bear proportion to assurance. Where assurance is low the walk will be low, because there will be little perception of privilege in the love of God. Where assurance is high the walk will be high, because the sense of privilege and responsibility will be high also. A king's son will not act as a beggar. He knows his station, his responsibilities, his prospects, and he will not sacrifice them. Believers are the children of a King, the consciousness of which high prerogative and royal favour leads them to walk in a manner suitable to their high calling. How shall they defile those hands which are to sway the sceptre of dominion? How shall they debase that brow which is to bear the diadem of majesty? How shall they pollute that body which is to be seated on Christ's throne of glory? To lofty destinies belongs a lofty conduct; and such, invariably, will be found among the heirs of the kingdom, in proportion as they know and realize their present privilege and future glory. May the Lord graciously increase the assurance of his Church in enabling her to look with confidence to the Advent of her Saviour,

and so to put on that holiness which befits men who wait for their Lord. Nor, let the fact be concealed, that one main reason why the professing Church loves not to hear of a coming Saviour is, because men have, generally, no assurance that they shall be then accepted of Him. May the Lord, therefore, increase this excellent gift to his Church, that believers may love to hear of their Lord's return and so daily be led, more and more, to that holiness in which they would desire to meet Him.

Humility is another effect of assurance. For if a man has found himself singled out by God as an heir of glory, and then thinks of his own sinfulness and weakness—sees and duly feels that he has no strength in himself, that unless he is held by God he must certainly fall—when, further, he meditates on the dignity of that high station to which he shall hereafter be raised—is not such an one cast down into the dust, and overwhelmed with the deepest feeling of his unworthiness? What shall he say to this amazing manifestation of love? To have been separated from the mass around, to have been chosen without any one ground in oneself for such a favour, what cause for humiliation is here! And, how does the soul, pressed down under the weight of conscious unworthiness, gladly take refuge in the

will and sovereignty of God, exclaiming with her Lord, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

(b.) Let us now view this doctrine with reference to our fellow men.

It is a common prejudice in the world that religion is melancholy; and certainly, from the sadness of many, even true Christians, there is often, apparently, too much ground for the opinion. Were however that fulfilled in believers generally, which is written, "The joy of the Lord shall be your strength;" and again, "Rejoice in the Lord always," the effect produced on "those who are without" might, by the Divine blessing, be highly beneficial. But, assurance causes joy, and without assurance there can be none of a continued and abiding character. How instructive, then, and convincing is that joy which thus results from assurance. It is serene, calm, pleasing; and the children of this world viewing its lovely effects in believers are constrained to confess that they possess a secret, which themselves know not. Hence, seeing the beauty and excellence of Christ's religion they are led to inquire, and by God's grace to embrace it; and thus, the assurance of the Church becomes a means of conveying a blessing to the world.

(c.) To God also, glory redounds from the

assurance in his people of the Divine favour. "Whoso offereth me thanks and praise he honoureth me," is the gracious declaration he has made. But, who shall thank Him save the redeemed; and, who of these shall most thank Him but those, who most fully realize their redemption? "I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation," is the language of experience. A doubting anxious soul cannot praise God. It is too much engaged with its own troubles and perplexities. It can only pray for mercies in prospect, and cannot render praise for benefits now enjoyed. It is struggling for existence, and cannot therefore bless God for repose. Its whole endeavour is to escape from hell. It cannot, therefore, praise God for the foretaste of the joys of heaven. But, with the assured Christian the case is otherwise: he has present pardon, present salvation, present enjoyment. For all these, therefore, he is able to render praise; and, thus, in his assurance God is glorified.

Having thus shown the scriptural character of assurance, that it is effected by the Spirit, and, also, in some degree, having exhibited its excellence, we will now further—

2. Endeavour to point out THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH IT RESTS.

The foundation on which assurance rests is *the decree of God*; which is firm, and immutable, as God himself. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation." Such is the Scripture before us, where we have—

A negative assurance, "God hath not appointed us to wrath."

To Pharaoh the Lord says, "In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power." And, in Peter, we read of those to whom Christ was a stone of stumbling, "whereunto, also, they were appointed." Now, to the Thessalonians Paul says, it is not so with them, "God hath not appointed us to wrath," "but"—

Affirmatively, he hath appointed us, "to obtain salvation."

This appointment, or decree, of God, as the basis of the believer's assurance, we have now to consider.

(a.) It is secret. It is secret in its cause, though revealed in its substance. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God." Into the cause of God's predestination we must not, therefore, attempt to look. But, "the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children." The fact, therefore, of predestination being revealed, to us the doctrine consequently belongs, and we are to use it. Why

God has singled out one nation to which to proclaim his Gospel and has disregarded another, or why He is pleased to bring light into one city or village and pass by others, or why, here and there, He selects individuals, whilst the masses are left, these are questions secret to us, and into which it would be profane to enter.

It is thus that, in reference to the secrecy of God's decrees, our Church, in her Seventeenth Article, expresses herself, "Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God; whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel *secret* to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour."

(*b.*) As the decree is secret, so, also, is it gracious. There is nothing in the objects selected by this decree calculated to excite the love of God towards them, for we know that universal degradation and apostasy rest upon us all. There is no loveliness in us, but the contrary. Hence, the grace of God is the more illustrious in his love to sinners, and in his giving his Son to die for the ungodly.

The graciousness of this decree is further shown by contrast. For, the love of God to his elect is

greatly illustrated by the fact of his having passed over multitudes of their fellow-men, whom He has not included in his decree of election; and, especially, by His entirely rejecting the whole race (as far as we know) of fallen spirits. Most gracious, therefore, is God's decree of salvation to His Church.

(c.) This appointment, or decree of God, is also from eternity. "He hath *chosen* us in Him before the foundation of the world."* "Eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, *promised* before the world began,"† is the portion of believers. And, "Grace *was given* us in Christ Jesus before the world began."‡

(d.) And, as the decree is from eternity, so is it to eternity. For "the gifts and callings of God are without repentance." "My sheep shall never perish," is the word of Christ; and, his character is, "I am the Lord, I change not." And, whilst He says, "Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up," He also declares, "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing."

Thus, you will observe, that the ground of the believer's assurance of eternal salvation, lies *not in anything in himself*, but, only *in the decree of Almighty God*. Mark, then, believer, how firm

* Eph. i. 4.

† Tit. i. 2.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 9.

is the foundation of thy assurance ! How perfectly secure in the decree of God, “ who cannot lie ! ”

Here is consolation to the man who hath been buffeted by the storms of temptation, who hath barely escaped the shipwreck of his hope, who hath been on the brink of hell, and hath all but sunk into everlasting perdition—before whose eyes eternal destruction hath arisen, and terrified and dismayed his soul ! To the man over whom the withering curse of the Law hath rolled and distracted his heart—to that man there is deep value in the eternal purpose and decree of God ; and when, being brought out of this dreadful state, he finds his feet upon a rock, he knows how to bless God for His eternal predestination. The ignorant, or prejudiced, may revile the doctrine, and the self-sufficient strive in vain to understand it ; but, such an one sees, that in the whole compass of Scripture there is no doctrine on which the soul can rest with so deep, so abiding, so perfect, a tranquillity as on this. Here is an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast ; and on this rock of God’s predestination the believer comfortably rests the assurance of his salvation.

Having thus shown the ground on which the assurance of believers rests, namely, God’s eternal decree of predestination, we have now only further to dwell,

3. ON THE EVIDENCE that their assurance in that decree, and consequently of salvation, is well founded.

We all admit the importance of evidence in weighty matters ; so, in this, which is of all things the most important, there must be the clearest evidence. For any one to rest on the decree of God, and say, " God has appointed me to salvation," and not to show cause for this persuasion, this were a vain delusion. But now, God hath coupled holiness with salvation, and the inseparable evidence of our being predestinated to eternal glory, is our Christian walk and character. Thus God, who hath ordained the end for his people, namely, salvation, hath also ordained the means—holiness of life.

No man attains to that salvation, speaking generally, except through holiness of life. Hence, while on the one hand, we would in the clearest manner, and in plainest language, state what the Scripture asserts to be the simple truth respecting God's decree, on the other hand, we would, with equal plainness of speech, set forth the absolute necessity of holiness, and assert, that without this, no man has sufficient evidence that he is amongst the predestinated to eternal glory.

Now, in this, the last part of our text, we may observe, that there are four of the main evidences

of scriptural assurance set forth,—sobriety, faith, love, and hope.*

Sobriety. “Let us, who are of the day, be sober.” Sobriety consists in moderation and watchfulness, not only in things pertaining to the indulgence of the body, such as food, sleep, raiment, &c., but especially in what pertains to the mind.

A Christian man is not intoxicated by worldly prosperity,—by station in society, or by the praises of his fellow-men. But, knowing how to estimate these things, and being well aware that something far better at the Lord’s Advent is in reserve for him, he uses the world without abusing it, and is sober-minded. This sobriety is a great attainment, and influences the whole course and tenour of a believer’s mind. It regulates his thoughts, and is manifested in his actions. In politics he is not led away by partisanship, having citizenship in heaven. In religion he is no sectarian zealot, for he waits for the manifestation of the catholic Church.

* The text, also, admirably shows the connexion between holiness and assurance, “Let us put on sobriety, faith, love, and hope; for God hath appointed us to obtain salvation.” In other words, “Since God has thus decreed to save us, let us walk in a manner worthy of his great salvation, even with that holiness which becomes his people.”

His affections are set on things above. He belongs not to the world, but is raised above, and carried beyond it, so that neither its joys nor its sorrows, its seductions nor its indulgences, habitually overthrow the moderation of his mind.

Here, then, in the exercise of this Christian sobriety, the believer, whilst all others are madly seeking the things of earth, has a good evidence that his assurance of God's favour to his soul is well founded ; for, it is by that favour alone that he escapes the common contagion of the world. As it is written, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me."

The next evidence is, *faith*,—"the breast-plate of faith,"—thus called, because, as a breast-plate protects the heart, so, faith guards and keeps the soul.

And, what does faith enable the Christian to effect? It enables him to overcome the world—"Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." While the multitude are carried headlong down the stream in "the course of this world," hurrying after the things of time and sense, which perish in the using, the Christian is enabled by faith, to stand aside,

as upon a rock, looking on with calmness and security, marvelling at the madness of the people, and preserved from the delusions which beguile them to destruction. He is separated, and distinct from others, through that great gift of faith which enables him to overcome the world. By the wondrous power of this faith "he endures, as seeing Him who is invisible." He so embraces the things which are not seen, that the things which are seen do comparatively but little affect him, and he daily sacrifices the things with which he is conversant for the things of which he has only heard. Whilst others live by sense, he lives by faith, and has a much clearer perception and much more powerful impression of things which are to be, than of things which are—so much stronger, that for the former he is daily sacrificing the latter.

O marvellous power of Divine faith, which thus carries a man out of himself and enables him to live to God! It is not flesh and blood which reveals this, but God alone.

What an evidence, then, in this faith, has the believing man that his assurance in being an object of God's decree of salvation is well grounded. In every victory over the world he sees the power of Divine grace, and is justly encouraged to believe that he shall receive the

end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul.

Love is another of the evidences given of a well-grounded assurance.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love"—love to God and love to man. He, therefore, who has this love has an evidence that the Spirit of God dwells in him, and hence, that he is "sealed unto the day of redemption." Again, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," which is the natural state of all men; for "God is not in all their thoughts." When, therefore, this enmity is by God's grace taken away, and the stone in a man's heart is taught to cry out, what an assurance has he thereby of God's favour and purpose towards him!

So, when a man by the same grace learns to love the brethren, joins himself to those whom formerly he despised, casts in his lot with those whom, perhaps, once he hated, and now makes common cause with them against the vanity and ungodliness of his former associates—in this manifestation of unfeigned love of the brethren a Christian has good ground of assurance that his name is written among the elect of God, because, "by this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Lastly, *Hope of salvation* is another cause of assuring our hearts before God.

This salvation is to be revealed at the day of God, when the Lord shall come. The believer, therefore, hopes for that day. He hopes for the coming of Christ. But what an unusual subject of hope! This is the day which men fear and hate. This is the day, the very thought of which this world cannot endure, much less hope for it. The Christian himself, perhaps, once, like others, dreaded and turned away from it. But, now he contemplates that great event, not only with calmness, but with desire. The Advent of Christ, because it brings with it salvation, is the object of his fervent hope, his most assiduous prayer. But whence is this? The devils have no hope. They only believe and tremble. The world has no hope. With less faith, and with less knowledge than the devils, they only, according to the extent of their faith, like them, tremble. Whence then, whilst all are hopeless, whence is the believer's hope? It is of God, "God hath begotten him unto a lively hope." And, in this rare and uncommon gift of hope the Saints have another evidence of their being chosen by God "according to his purpose and grace."

And thus, in these several gifts of sobriety, faith, love, and hope of salvation, believers have so many evidences whereby they may know that they are not deceiving themselves, in believing

that they are included in God's eternal decree of predestination to everlasting life.

CONCLUSION.

Having thus gone through our text; having dwelt from it on THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S PEOPLE; on the SALVATION TO WHICH THEY ARE APPOINTED; and, on THEIR ASSURANCE OF THIS SALVATION, it remains only that we should bring our subject to a conclusion by a few practical observations.

1. See the extreme grandeur of that salvation which God has prepared for his saints,—grand from the eternal purpose of Him who decreed it,—grand from the costly blood of Him who effected it,—grand from the mighty power of Him who applies it,—and grand from the glory, dignity, and felicity of the salvation itself. It is God's will that "through the Church should be made known unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom," as also the grace, power, and glory of God; and consequently, in His Church, He will display in an especial and crowning manner, all his glorious attributes. The members of this Church, which is the Church of the first resurrection, have therefore peculiar privileges over and above, not only angels, but also over those who shall live on

the earth during the millennium. For, "on these the second death hath no power." They are to "sit with Christ on his throne;" they are to "judge angels;" they are to "have power over the nations" (then in the flesh); they are to be "in the likeness of Christ's resurrection;" and, above all, they are to be "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." The Saints are in dignity higher than Angels, because they are "partakers of the Divine nature," and, because Christ has assumed their human nature. But, the resurrection saints are exalted above their fellow-men who will inhabit this globe after their assumption, by reason of those dignities just enumerated, which they enjoy over and beyond them. Blessed and happy, therefore, are we who now believe; because God has prepared for us who "have not received the mark of the beast," if a greater state of trial now, yet a far more exceeding weight of glory than those who come after us in smoother and in happier times.

Let, then, the Christian search into and meditate on the exceeding great salvation prepared for him at the Lord's coming, and so learn to solace his present woes. Let him set it in all its revealed grandeur before him, and he will find it cast a light around his path, which will aid him when his feet stumble on the dark mountains, which will remove stumbling-blocks and difficulties,

and which will enable him to go on his way rejoicing.

2. Further; how high is the privilege of the Christian, who is assured that this great salvation is his own!

A state of uncertainty is always a state of discomfort, to be relieved from which is a benefit; but, to be certified that great and extensive good is our portion, of which before we were in ignorance or in doubt, this is a happiness indeed. Such is the case with the assured Christian. First, ignorance, then doubt, then assurance, and then salvation,—these are the several stages from, and to, which the Lord is bringing him. In this chain he has only one higher link, namely, salvation itself, of which, through his assurance, he has a constant foretaste. Happy, then, is he in the light of knowledge which he enjoys; happy in the earnest of felicity which he possesses. He is not in darkness that that day should overtake him as a thief. Nor, is he in uneasiness as to its results. He contemplates, as subjects to which his mind is habitually familiar, the overthrow of this present system, the disruption of society, the conflagration of the earth, and the catastrophe of all things. He knows in whom he has believed. From good and sufficient evidence he is assured that, with the whole Church, he is securely shut up in the ark of God's decree, where no tempests can destroy, no

waterfloods overwhelm. In patience he possesses his soul, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God.

Such are the privileges of Assurance. Such is the well-grounded confidence which it affords in looking forward to the tremendous realities of the future.

3. The necessity of assurance here naturally claims our notice.

We do not make assurance of the essence of faith, and so assert that it is necessary to salvation. No; it is not necessary to possess it in order to be saved; but, it is necessary to possess it in order to be comfortably saved. And it is on this ground that we urge its attainment. For, what satisfaction can a thoughtful man enjoy in looking forward to the bursting of that thunder-storm, now rapidly obscuring the earth's horizon, and about to involve it in destruction, unless he feels assured that his way of escape is secure? Who, without a feeling of extreme dread, can contemplate the terrible future, unless there be a firm conviction in his mind that Christ will acknowledge him in that day of doom? Oh, that Christians would more meditate on that day, and more seek assurance of salvation in their clear escape out of its overthrow! Oh, that this great subject of assurance, so essential to the happiness

and holiness of the Church, were more distinctly brought forward, and more fully received! Let believers awake to its importance, and acknowledge how absolutely essential it is to a tranquil contemplation of the Lord's second coming.

4. Further, I observe that, through want of assurance, the Church is much hindered from fully looking into the great salvation yet to be revealed.

We hear something of present salvation, and a delightful theme it is. But, it is to be feared, that the Church, in general, is too well satisfied to rest in it, without any very fervent desire after that future, and infinitely more perfect salvation, which is to be revealed at the Lord's coming. If, however, believers were more detached from the world, and had they a clearer view of their own personal interest in the glory of the Second Advent, would it be thus? I cannot doubt, that one great objection which too often is manifested to hearing of Christ's coming is, because men do not feel prepared to meet it. They dread the event, and, hence, they do not like its mention. Here, we apprehend, is one cause with a large section of the professing Church of the unpopularity of the preaching the Second Advent. They are in a low, worldly state; they are content with things as they are; the very subject of assurance is strange to them; and,

hence, they have no sympathy with the stirring and alarming fact of the Lord's Advent, to the comfortable consideration of which the doctrine of assurance is absolutely necessary. But, the fact must be proclaimed in animating strains, and so the Church be led to seek an assured interest in it.

5. And this brings us in the last place to the means of obtaining assurance.

The Holy Spirit has already been pointed out as the agent in conferring this precious boon. It is He who imparts this grace to the soul, which, with all other benefits, is the purchase of the Saviour's blood. It is through means of prayer to be sought from Him. He it is, who, till Christ's return, administers in his absence the affairs of his Church. Seek we, then, his influence, and let us put ourselves under his guidance. And, as this grace of assurance is absolutely necessary to the comfort of the Church, not to say to her more full holiness and usefulness, so let it be sought with persevering earnestness. Then will believers possess in themselves an earnest of those joys of which, at Christ's Advent, they shall fully partake. Then, without fear, will they be enabled to lift up their heads, as their "redemption draweth nigh." And, when "the sign of the Son of Man" shall appear in the heavens, and "there shall be on earth distress of nations and perplexity,"

amidst the agonizing cry of the ungodly, the thunders of the last trumpet, the heavings of the great earthquake, and the convulsions of astounded nature, they shall take up their parable and say, "This is the Lord, we have waited for Him, and He will save us ; this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will rejoice, and be glad in his salvation."

LECTURE XI.

THE VARIOUS GRACES TO BE EXERCISED IN
THE PROSPECT OF THE ADVENT.

BY THE REV. W. MARSH, D.D.,

INCUMBENT OF ST. MARY'S, LEAMINGTON, AND CHAPLAIN TO EARL CADOGAN.

1 THESS. V. 23.

*“ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ;
and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul,
and body, be preserved blameless unto the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

THE holiness of God is that attribute of His nature which gives a lustre to all His perfections. Without holiness, wisdom, in any being, might degenerate into craft, power into tyranny, and mercy itself would be but a false tenderness, giving encouragement to sin. At the view, therefore, of this attribute, the angels express their ecstasy, “ Holy, . holy, holy, is the Lord

of Hosts." Consequently, whatever emanates from Him must be holy. His law, which is a transcript of the Divine Mind, is holy. And each particular commandment is holy. In the plan for recovering fallen beings, the interests of this attribute are secured. The Most High chose His Church in Christ that she should be holy ;* and it is the design of the everlasting Gospel to restore holiness to the soul of man. Its genius is not ceremonial, but spiritual, consisting not in meats and drinks, or outward observances, but in the culture of such interior graces as compose the essence of virtue, perfect the character, and purify the heart. These form the soul of religion. All the rest are but her terrestrial attire, which she will lay aside when she passes the threshold of eternity.

That view of truth, therefore, which, while it gives peace, constrains to purity, must be the most correct. And what more desirable than such a view as shall strengthen those graces, to whose growth shall be proportioned the splendours of immortality? Hence, beloved brethren, the importance of those subjects which have been discussed at these Lectures. We venture to affirm, that there is no grace which may not be called into exercise by a believing view of the Advent of our blessed Lord. This is our present

* Ephes. i. 4.

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coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

THE holiness of God is that attribute of His nature which gives a lustre to all His perfections. Without holiness, wisdom, in any being, might degenerate into craft, power into tyranny, and mercy itself would be but a false tenderness, giving encouragement to sin. At the view, therefore, of this attribute, the angels express their ecstasy, “ Holy, .holy, holy, is the Lord

direct both their faith and their hope, he preaches the doctrine of the Advent. "Those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."* And when he would support believers under their trials, he brings before them the same subject,—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time: wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be

* Acts iii. 18—21.

tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”* And when he would quicken them to diligence in their Christian walk and calling, he still refers to that great event,—“ Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren” (inactive) “ nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”†

St. Paul takes the same course. He brings the sinner before the judgment-seat of Christ. He supports the believer by a view of the glory to be revealed. He animates the disciple by the thought of his Master’s appearing.‡ And in all this, the

* 1 Peter i. 3—7. † 2 Peter i. 5—11. ‡ Titus ii. 13.

Apostles did but follow the footsteps of their Lord. Would he alarm the consciences of the Sanhedrim? "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."* Would he quicken His disciples in the discharge of their duty? "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding: that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good-man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."† Would he encourage them in the exercise of that benevolence which meets with no return in the present life? "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

* Matt. xxvi. 64.

† Luke xii. 35, 40.

and thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompense thee ; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”* Indeed, both for warning, and self-examination, and encouragement, our Lord delivers parable after parable, on the subject of His return ; when the wise virgins shall enter, and the foolish be shut out ; the good fish be preserved, and the bad cast away ; the wheat be gathered into the garner, and the chaff be consumed ; when those who have confessed him, shall be confessed, and those who have denied him, be denied. Thus the Advent is the great subject of Scripture and is designed to have an influence over the fears and the hopes of individuals—over the principles and the practice of the universal Church. Such is the general view of the subject.

But the appointed subject calls for

2. *A particular view.*

You will understand by the particular view, those graces to be exercised in the prospect of the Advent, which occur in the immediate context.

The Thessalonians were “to exhort and edify one another,” by the great truths which had been conveyed to them by the Gospel of Christ. They were also “to esteem very highly in love” those who had preached these truths among them, and

• Luke xiv. 13, 14.

were continually reminding them of the same. The teachers were "to beseech the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, to support the weak, and to be patient toward all." The people were "to render evil for evil to no man, but ever to follow that which is good, both among themselves and to all men." Then follow those peculiar graces and duties to which our immediate subject refers.

The first is, *The exercise of joy.*

"Rejoice evermore." How many are prejudiced against religion, as if it would deprive them of all present comfort! Thus, though they may regard it as necessary to final happiness, yet they consider it as burdensome by the way. Doubtless, true religion will call men from "the pleasures of sin," but it will provide more rational and enduring pleasures in their place—pleasures allied in nature to those which, in degree, will be enjoyed, in their fulness, in a better state. *False* views of religion may be productive of a morbid state of mind; and a resistance of *the true* will deprive men of peace. But a scriptural view of the Divine character, and of the great things God has done for us—with faith in the good He has promised to us, may be productive even of joy. Christianity always affords ground for joy, though various causes may hinder its exercise.

But we connect it now with the Second Advent. And is not this a subject of joy?

Do we compassionate the fall of the Jews, and would we have them converted? Are we philanthropists, and desirous that true knowledge and happiness should cover the earth, and the groans of creation cease? Are we members of the Christian Church, and long to see the general assembly perfected? Then, well may we rejoice at the prospect of the Redeemer's return. The Jews shall "look unto Him whom they have pierced, and mourn." "The kingdoms of this world will be the kingdoms of our Lord." There will be "a restitution of all things."* And, as to the Church, it is the coming of the Bridegroom; it is the return of the Friend; it is the bestower of rewards; it is the victory over the grave, and the triumph of truth.† "Looking," says St. Paul, "for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Believers, with such a prospect, "rejoice evermore."

But we shall never attain to the exercise of such grace, unless we attend to,

2. *The duty of prayer.*

"Pray without ceasing." As the daily burnt-

* Acts iii.; Zech. xii. 10; Isa. xi. 9; 1 Thess. iv. 17.

† Matt. xxv.

offering in the Temple was termed a continual burnt-offering, so, I conceive, there is a special reference in these words to morning and evening prayer. Christians, who know the worth of prayer, will indeed embrace every fit opportunity. The Jews offered their prayers and praises while the incense was burning. Our High Priest ever liveth. We may at "all times and in all places," "come boldly unto the throne of grace." And our Lord, with reference to His Second Advent, particularly directs His disciples to take heed, and watch and pray, not knowing when the time is.* "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."† Public and private, and social and ejaculatory prayer, conveys us into the region of health. Grace in believers is not like light in the sun, but like oil in the lamp; and fresh supplies must be obtained.

If we be thus authorized to rejoice, and thus encouraged to pray, shall we neglect,

3. *The offering of gratitude.*

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Past mercies and present blessings, and future prospects, demand our gratitude. If our "creation,

* Mark xiii. 33.

† Luke xxi. 36.

preservation, and all the blessings of this life," call for our thanks, much more "the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ," "the means of grace," which make it known, and "the hope of glory," which it inspires. Oh! if we could but anticipate "the manifestation of the sons of God," "the glorious liberty of the children of God," and "the redemption of the body," at the coming of our Lord, the very thought of that coming Advent would call forth our daily offerings of praise and thanksgiving.* God would have His people to be a thankful people. Whatever trials the Church may be called to sustain, yet let the apostle's view be adopted, and there will be a constant theme for thanksgiving. Does our Lord say, "Behold, I come quickly?" Let us thankfully answer, "Amen, even so, Come, Lord Jesus."

But if we would be supported by these views, there must be in the temper of our minds,

4. *A yielding to the Spirit.*

"Quench not the Spirit." In those days miraculous gifts were bestowed, and those who had them were not to neglect the proper use of them. "Stir up," said St. Paul to Timothy, "Stir up the gift which is in thee." By neglect, or by casting earth or water upon it, flame may be

* Rom. viii. 18—25.

extinguished. The ordinary gifts of that same Holy Spirit may be extinguished by the indulgence of sensual, worldly, or malevolent dispositions ;—by the pleasures of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, or by not yielding to their influence. “ My Spirit shall not always strive with man,” even in outward ordinances. “ Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption,”* lest you lose present comfort or special assistance, and, like Samson, be shorn of your strength. Among other means of keeping the flame alive there should be,

5. *A respect for prophesying.*

“ Despise not prophesyings.” This also, in that age, was the miraculous gift of interpreting and applying infallibly the Old Testament Scriptures. But certainly, as a great portion of those Scriptures is devoted to the subject of prophecy, in the strict sense of the word, the Church of Christ should have a respect for it, by receiving and considering it in its due proportion. To have the Scriptures opened and applied is an inestimable privilege: and to have our expectations raised and well-founded, with reference to coming events, is among the means of preparing us for those events whenever they shall arise. “ We have also

* Gen. vi. 3; Eph. iv. 30.

a more sure word of prophecy ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.”* But that none may be misled by the opinions or traditions of men, all are called upon, with reference to anything proposed as an article of faith, and with reference to a steadfast belief of that which is revealed, to be guided by,

6. *An examination of the Word.*

“ Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.” The Apostles evidently recommend examination on the part of the people. The Bereans nobly hesitated till they had tested the preaching of an apostle by a reference to the infallible guide. They knew that Moses and the prophets were inspired, and “ they searched those Scriptures daily ;” and thus became true and consistent disciples of the Lord. St. John gives similar advice :—“ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God ; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”† A blind and implicit faith may answer the purpose of a corrupt Church, but will never be called for by the faithful ministers of Christ. They desire their people to receive nothing that has not been revealed ; while they as earnestly desire that they

* 2 Pet. i. 19.

† 1 John iv. 1.

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may be stedfast in the faith, and unmoved from the hope, of that which God has been graciously pleased to make known ; and so manifest sincere approbation of Divine truth, and a close adherence to it.

In the exercise of these graces, and discharge of these duties, the Apostle would have them,

7. "*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*"

In this course they would recommend their principles to others. Their light would shine before men. They were therefore to abstain from the appearance of evil in the sight of men, as well as from the reality of it in the sight of God. The Christian, who cultivates tenderness of conscience, is an honour to his profession. He not only recommends religion to the unconverted, but, instead of impeding, he furthers it in his believing brethren. Oh, let not the eye of conscience be injured. Guard against all evil. Though you may not be stranded and lost for ever upon it, the coast of evil is dangerous : "Abstain from all appearance" of it. Such is the requirement, such is the holiness of your religion ; keep, therefore, the Second Advent in view, and the graces to be exercised with reference to it, and then despair not of any attainment.

It is perfectly true, that knowledge, resolution, vows, hopes, and expectations, will fail, if we be left

destitute of “power from on high ;” but when was that power ever denied to those who pray ? Hence, St. Paul closes his epistle of doctrines, and prophecies, and promises, and precepts, *with prayer* ; and takes encouragement from the character of God, as the God of peace, and looks to Him to accomplish that, which Divine power alone can accomplish. “ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thus he implores, that their whole person may come under the influence of these great truths ; that they might progress and persevere in the ways of God ; that they might be as an army, whose troops are undiminished by any accident or calamity, every constituent part of their nature being sanctified ; their *spirit*, or immaterial and immortal principle, whereby man possesses an intellectual nature, formed after the image of God ; and their *soul*, or animal life, which is the seat of sensations, appetites, and passions ; and their *body*, which is the frame of that soul, and the habitation of that spirit. And if the intellect and conscience be sanctified and command the soul, the body shall be kept in subjection ; and, at the last day, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the whole man shall appear blameless, and remain blameless and blessed for ever.

Thus, beloved brethren, the subject of the Advent is calculated to awaken the unbelieving and profane ; to convince the thoughtless and false professors ; to direct the Church in her appropriate duties ; and to animate the believer in his Christian warfare. These, then, are “ the graces to be exercised in the prospect of the Advent.” Here is the power that can plant them, and call them into exercise. And that power is the source of all happiness, for He is the God of peace. And may not one of you be missing in that day, or now resemble the sleeping sentinel, but be watchful at your post of duty ! Would that sentinel, in the army of Epaminondas, have slept, had he known that his general would examine the state of the guard that night ? But, not imagining such an event, he fell asleep, and Epaminondas, therefore, took his spear and struck him to the heart, saying, “ I found thee sleeping, and I leave thee so.” His sleep ended in death.

Then, may none of you slumber through want of watchfulness, or stumble through want of diligence, or cease to contend with difficulties through want of prayer, or fall through self-confidence, “ But may the God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ! ”

LECTURE XII.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD THE CONFIDENCE OF THE WAITING CHURCH.

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1 THESS. V. 24.

“ Faithful is he that calleth you.”

THE last, and not the least interesting subject of this course of lectures has fallen into feeble and unworthy hands ; not, certainly, by the desire of him who has to handle it. For the ablest, most experienced, and most advanced Christian may well consider it beyond his powers adequately to treat of the *faithfulness of God*.

And yet it is a subject upon which the weakest believer, yea, a very babe in Christ, may find something to say. May our gracious God and Father grant that what shall be said at this time

may be so blessed by the Spirit to all our souls, that we may be established in full confidence and patient waiting for the coming of the Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake !

The subject is, "*The faithfulness of God the confidence of the waiting Church.*" And this will lead us to make some remarks on

I. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

II. THE CONFIDENCE OF THE CHURCH.

I. *The faithfulness of God.* It has pleased God to make many "exceeding great and precious promises" to his waiting Church. The Bible abounds with words of encouragement and consolation to his people while sojourning as "strangers and pilgrims" in this wilderness of a world. Here, indeed, they have no continuing city, and this is not their rest because it is polluted. Temptations, difficulty, and sin mark their way, and sadly hinder them in running the race that is set before them.

True it is, that even for this their earthly pilgrimage there are many gracious promises of unspeakable value, which assure every faithful follower of Jesus, "There shall no harm happen unto thee," and "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

But these are not the class of promises (large and precious though they be) to which reference

is now made. There are more, *many* more, better and more precious than these. For, however great the blessing of knowing that our God shall supply *all* our need, all our journey through ; that we shall be guided in perplexity and protected in danger ; the blessing seems to lose somewhat of its value when we remember how short is the life in which such need, such perplexity, and such danger occur. "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away."

Far be it from us to seem, even for a moment, to undervalue providential mercies. They know but little of the trials of real Christians, or of the comfort of a Saviour's help, who would do so. But, speaking by comparison, the journeying mercies promised to the Christian pilgrim are, like his afflictions, light and but for a moment, when taken in contrast with the promises of the "glory that shall be revealed at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And *these* are the "exceeding great and precious promises" of which we speak.

Yes, my brethren, very excellent things are spoken of the hopes and prospects of the Church in "that day." Something, nay much, it is to be promised that in all their sorrows they shall have the sympathy of Jesus ; but more, far more, it

is to know that "sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Something, yea, a very great thing, it is to be promised that sin shall not have dominion over them. But, oh, inconceivably greater is the promise that there shall enter into that kingdom "nothing that defileth or maketh a lie:" they shall never sin at all.

Something, a very blessed thing it is, to be promised continual access to a throne of grace, through the mediation of our advocate with the Father. But, oh, infinitely more blessed, the promise that they shall see Him and be like Him!

These are the promises connected with the appearing and kingdom of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, which we especially regard as exceeding great and precious. Perfect happiness, perfect holiness, the presence of Jesus, and conformity to him! These are the promised blessings which ought to fill our hearts with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

But why, my brethren, are you at this time, and in connexion with this subject, led to think of the promises of our God made to his Church in his covenant of love? Our subject is the *faithfulness of God*, not his promises to his Church. True, it is so. But wherein consists the value of these promises to the Church? In this, He is *faithful* that hath promised.

The performance of a promise depends upon the ability and fidelity of him who makes it. That the Almighty God is *able* to make all grace abound toward his waiting Church the very fact of his omnipotence proves. But what would his power alone avail for the performance of his promise, if he were not also faithful to remember and to keep it? Clearly, nothing. But God *is* faithful, and hence the performance of the promise is sure. With him there is no yea and nay, but all his promises in Christ Jesus to his waiting Church, are “yea, and in him amen.” And very remarkable are the frequency and force of Scripture language upon this point. The testimony of an ungodly but an enlightened prophet on this subject is remarkably striking. I mean the covetous Balaam, “God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it, or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” How humiliating, and yet how encouraging is this contrast! How humiliating! The faithlessness and fickleness of man, his falsehood and deceit, are here implied as known and unquestionable. “If God,” says the Prophet, “were a *man*, you might expect him to lie, to say and not to do; to speak and not make it good.” O what an humbling picture

is here given of the nature of man! Not of one particular man merely, nor of some of the worst of the race, but of the *whole race* by nature! What is this but confirming, by anticipation, the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?"—a description suggested by the Spirit of God to his inspired servant, and ratified and enforced by God manifest in the flesh, when Jesus said, "Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts; adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile the man."

But if it be humiliating to consider such a dark description of man, how encouraging and how refreshing must it be to turn to the contrast presented by the faithfulness of God!

It should be noticed, that God, in wonderful condescension to his doubting, fearing Church, has been pleased, in declaring his counsel of love, to confirm the promise by an oath. "God willing," (says the Apostle to the Hebrews,) "willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an *oath*; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie,

we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Observe how the whole force of the passage, and all the strength of the consolation, rest upon these words, "It was impossible for God to lie." Neither the promise nor the oath could give such strong consolation, if God, like a man, could lie or be a covenant-breaker. But God is faithful. "I," saith he, "am the Lord: I change not."

Oh! what a resting-place is here for those who mark the instability of all earthly things, and feel painfully that "all things are given to change." Whatever alterations may take place among men, with God is "no variableness nor shadow of turning." And with what force does this apply to all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, as contrasted with the kingdom of glory which the Lord Jesus is coming to take unto himself!—"The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

The glories of all other earthly thrones and empires have passed, and are passing away, because there has been no promise of a faithful God that their pomp and power should abide. In vain are the wisdom of the laws and the policy of

statesmen, in endeavouring to give perpetuity to nations;—"the fashion of this world passeth away." But hear what a faithful God has promised in the language of prophecy concerning the kingdom to be established at the coming of the Lord: "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and HIS KINGDOM THAT WHICH SHALL NOT BE DESTROYED." (Dan. vii. 13, 14.)

Nearly twenty-four centuries have passed away since this kingdom was thus spoken of by the prophet; nevertheless, "we see not yet all things put under him." But *God is faithful*; and the Lord our God shall come, and all the saints with him.

Long indeed has the Church had to wait in faith for the second coming of the Lord in glory, in like manner as it was before he came to fulfil the promises of his first coming in humility. Yet the manger in Bethlehem, and the cross upon Calvary, at length proved the faithfulness of him who had promised by his prophets, "A virgin

shall conceive and bear a Son;" and "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities."

And not less faithful will he be in fulfilling the promises of the Advent in glory. Scoffers, while "walking after their own lusts," may say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" "But the day of the Lord will come," and manifest to the whole of the waiting Church the words of Paul to the believing Thessalonians, "Faithful is he that calleth you."

It is the faithfulness of God which gives ground and significancy to all that has been previously said by the various heralds of salvation who have preached in these Lectures. Take away the faithfulness of God, and the whole of the fair and glorious structure they have raised falls into nothing.

For, if God be not *faithful*, to what purpose shall faith in the Gospel bring forth the fruit of "patient waiting for Christ?" The hope which is in "full exercise" may be cherished only to be blasted, and abounding love, though blessed in itself, be no "preparation for the Advent." Except God be *faithful* the Church shall never attain "established holiness," no angels shall "attend in the day of Christ," and "the living saints" shall not be translated to meet the Lord in the air. Unless the promises are made by a

faithful God, there will be no “perpetual abode of the Church with Christ,” and no knowledge can be right which teaches of “times and seasons” for the coming of the Lord. If God be not *faithful*, the worldly have no “motive of alarm” in the Second Advent; “assurance” will be groundless presumption in its prospect; and all the “various graces” will be exercised and flourish, like fair flowers, to give forth a sweet savour for a short time, only to wither and die eternally.

BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL; and, therefore, there shall not pass away “one jot or one tittle” from his promises to the Church till all be fulfilled. And upon this faithfulness of God is grounded what is secondly to be spoken of,

II. THE CONFIDENCE OF THE CHURCH.

“We are always confident,” says the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church, “knowing, that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And, in like manner of speaking, the Church may say, “We are always confident, that when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory.”

And yet this confidence is by no means inconsistent with prayer, that we may be “kept by the power of God,” and prepared by the grace of God for the coming of that day.

The electing love of God in securing to every one of his chosen people everlasting glory, by no means exempts them from diligence, watchfulness, self-examination, and prayer. Nor will it have this effect upon the minds of any of that people. No, not even when they have the *full assurance* that their sins are forgiven and their souls are saved.

The history of David presents us with a remarkable illustration of this union of confidence in a promise grounded on faithfulness and prayer for its fulfilment.

The Lord said to him, by his servant Nathan the Prophet, "When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels: and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name; and I will STABLISH THE THRONE OF HIS KINGDOM FOR EVER. I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chastise him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy THRONE SHALL BE ESTABLISHED FOR EVER."

Although this promise had immediate refer-

ence to Solomon, yet it is easy to see that a greater than Solomon is here. Doubtless he of whom it was said by the angel, "The Lord God shall give unto him the THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever."

Now, though David had no doubt that the Lord had sent him this message, and as little doubt that he would accomplish his gracious purpose, yet we find him praying to this effect:—"O Lord God! the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of Hosts is God over Israel; and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. For thou, O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed unto thy servant, saying, I will build thee a house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee, And now, O Lord God! thou art the God, and THY WORDS BE TRUE; and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant. Therefore now, let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it MAY CONTINUE FOR EVER before thee; for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever." (2 Sam. vii. 25—29.)

Here we see the firmest confidence that the Lord had sent and would perform the promise, combined with earnest supplication that he would establish his house and his throne for ever.

We have in the conduct of the Apostle Paul, another striking instance of confidence in the performance of a promise, combined with the use of means for its accomplishment. When the ship which was taking him to Rome was overtaken by a tempest, and all hope that they should be saved was taken away, he "stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and so have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar. And lo! God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, Sirs, be of good cheer, for I BELIEVE GOD, THAT IT SHALL BE EVEN AS IT WAS TOLD ME."

Notwithstanding, full as his confidence was in the faithfulness of God to keep them all alive according to his promise, when the shipmen were about to desert the ship, Paul prevented their

departure, saying to the centurion, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved."

And thus it is also with respect to the confidence which believers may have individually as to their own salvation, or that of others.

See this exemplified in the context whence the text is taken. The apostle prays for the believing Thessalonians in these words:—"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Some might have supposed, had this prayer stood alone, that there was *some doubt* whether they would be thus preserved blameless, or at least that the apostle had some doubt in his own mind on the subject. But the following verse sets this supposition aside altogether; for, after praying that they might be prepared and preserved for the coming of the Lord, he immediately adds, "Faithful is he that calleth you, WHO ALSO WILL DO IT." Here is not the mere absence of doubt on the subject, but the express and direct assurance of it. Precisely in the same manner we find David again expressing his confidence, and yet praying as though he were uncertain, and that too, while recognising the faithfulness of God.

In Psalm cxxxviii. 8, he says, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Here is confidence,—confidence grounded on the faithfulness of God; for he adds, "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever." Nevertheless, he continues, "Forsake not the works of thine own hands."

And so, too, may the Church be consistently warned to watch and pray, lest any "should seem to come short," and yet be encouraged by the words of the apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 35), "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

Yes, dear brethren, there is abundant scriptural authority for "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." For "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. i. 9.)

However great the danger, and however deep the guilt of those who indulge a false confidence of salvation with worldly lives and unconverted hearts, it is both the wisdom and the privilege of

every one of the saints to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Faith unfettered by doubt is not presumption. Confidence founded on the faithfulness of God, springs from spiritual wisdom. Such confidence, without question, is the blessed privilege of every one of the waiting Church; for the Word of the Lord to each and all of them is, "Faithful is he that calleth you."

Based upon the faithfulness of God, the confidence of the Church is like the house built upon a rock, spoken of by our Lord. And in this confidence every member of that Church may find—

1. Support under sufferings.
2. Strength in temptation.
3. Encouragement in duty.

1. A believer, confident in the faithfulness of his forgiving God and merciful Father, may find support under sufferings. Often is a Christian called to experience in his own history the truth of that word of the Psalmist, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." As Jesus himself was a man of "sorrows, and afflicted with grief," they not seldom find, that "so are we in this world." They are not exempt from the sorrows

and sufferings to which they are exposed in common with the unconverted. Sickness, pain, and bereavement; poverty, disappointment, and loss; these, and all the other ills incident to them as men, they may be called to suffer as well as the world. But besides these, they have sorrows peculiarly their own,—sorrows such as the world knoweth not, neither can know. Their deep, distressing sense of sin and conscious unworthiness, are sometimes so great as to be almost overwhelming. And when, in these dark and sorrowful frames, a believer can get no clear view of the pardoning mercy of God, through the blood of Christ, to his sinful soul, his affliction becomes heavy indeed! His soul will then, indeed, be “bowed down within him;” he may go mourning all the day long, and by reason of his sorrow his rest may depart from him in the night season. Sufferings such as these are real and great, and those who endure them have need of strong support; and such support is afforded them by confidence in the faithfulness of God. Whatever they may *feel* under such afflictions, they may yet *trust*. They may “hope against hope.” Every such distressed child of God may reason thus with himself: “God is faithful; surely he will keep the promise he has given to pardon all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him. I do

repent; yea, I do turn to him, asking for pardon in the name of Jesus. Will he—can he cast out my soul? No; for he is not like me, fickle, changeable, and faithless by nature. Whatever I may *feel*, I will yet read his Word and trust it. ‘Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out.’” And here he finds support. The Scripture cannot be broken; the Word of a faithful God cannot be changed, and his pardon is sure. He finds, therefore, in his darkest hours, a voice encouraging him, and saying, “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” Thus, under all their sufferings, confidence in the faithfulness of God yields support to the waiting Church.

2. Nor is it less able to give them *strength in temptation*. You will remember, doubtless, how plainly this is affirmed by the apostle Paul, in writing to the Church at Corinth. He says, (1 Cor. x. 13), “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but GOD is FAITHFUL, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it.” Oh, how strengthening, how encouraging, to trust in the faithfulness of an

Almighty Friend! When grievously assaulted by temptations, when without there are fightings and within there are fears, the poor tempted believer is ready to cry out, "I shall one day perish." He knows there is such a terrible array of strength drawn up against him. The world and its cares, the flesh and its lusts, the devil and his devices, all these working together for his ruin, seem to make it impossible that he shall come safely out of the conflict. He feels his weakness, his ignorance, his helplessness; he is like one in deep waters ready to sink. And when thus "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," he would be entirely defeated, and eternally destroyed by his enemies, but for his well-placed confidence in a faithful God. He calls upon him in the day of trouble and temptation, "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." And he finds innumerable answers to his prayer in the Word of his God, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I will STRENGTHEN thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." So that when the Christian soldier's heart fails him, and

he despairs of victory, he finds that his faithful God "giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he INCREASETH STRENGTH." When the Christian traveller is tempted to fear that he shall never reach his heavenly Father's mansion, he experiences that, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be STRONGER and STRONGER." And thus, looking up with confidence to his merciful and faithful High Priest, in all his temptations he can say, "I can do all things through Christ which STRENGTHENETH me."

3. And, again, confidence in the faithfulness of God affords great *encouragement in duty*. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

And it should be observed, that not only is the certainty of the "recompence of reward" assured to the saint, but even the *degree* of it proportioned to his diligence. The very least services springing from love to Christ are noticed now, and shall be remembered in that day. As our Lord Jesus said, when on earth, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward." And,

in faithful fulfilment of this gracious promise, we find him saying, to those on his right hand at that day, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For . . . inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It is not, for a moment, to be supposed that the faithfulness of God in proportioning the degrees of glory to the fruitfulness of his people in good works, implies any merit in them, or that they have any righteousness of their own. Far otherwise. Their salvation is altogether of grace; they are justified freely by faith, without the works of the law. Yet has our gracious God and Father been pleased to leave it on record for their encouragement to diligence, that, being fully pardoned, and eternally saved, their works shall all be recorded and acknowledged in the kingdom of glory.

In truth, it is easy to see that this doctrine, that he "which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully," cannot lead men to self-righteousness, if we will bear in mind that none can sow at all till eternal life is secured. Men must first believe and be saved, before they can do any good works. They must be really and effectually called by the sovereign grace of God to a state of salvation, before they can confide in his faithful-

ness to minister unto them an abundant entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Seeing, then, my dear brethren in Christ, that these things are so, what cause you have to run with patience, with joy, with diligence, with confidence, the race that is set before you; for you run "not as uncertainly:" By no means. You have the promise of a faithful God, that you shall be kept by his Almighty power, through faith, unto everlasting salvation. He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Oh, then, trust him; trust in him with all your hearts to support, to strengthen, and to encourage you! He will never fail, nor deceive, nor desert you. He will supply all your need. He will guide you by his counsel, and hereafter receive you to glory.

Others will fall away and perish, but not you who confide in the promises of a faithful God. The self-righteous formalist, and the careless sinner, may tremble at the coming of the day of the Lord; for, to them, he will come in "flaming fire, taking vengeance." They, too, will find him faithful, terribly faithful, to their everlasting confusion, in fulfilling his threatened sentence of eternal wrath. But you, together with all the rest of his waiting Church, may lift up your heads with joy, in the prospect of that day, knowing that

“your redemption draweth nigh.” For when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and they which are alive and remain shall be changed, you shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. You shall be for ever delivered from sorrow, and suffering, and pain. You shall never sin again; no, not even in thought, far less in word or in deed. You shall be entirely conformed to the image of Jesus; your vile bodies shall be made like unto his glorious body, according to the working of his mighty power; yea, your whole spirit and soul and body shall “be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For, “faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

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